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YOU AMERICANS



# YOU AMERICANS

*Fifteen Foreign Press Correspondents  
Report their Impressions of the  
United States and its People*

Edited By  
B. P. ADAMS



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## INTRODUCTION

"ARE we really like that?" is the question American readers will ask, when they note in the following pages what fifteen keen observers of the foreign press actually think about our manners and customs as a people and economic and political developments in the United States. As we read, there may come to us a new and vivid appreciation of what, in the minds of thinking people of other countries, this favored land of ours means to the world of today and tomorrow.

This book had its inception in a conversation at one of the regular dinners of the Association of Press Correspondents in the United States. This society was formed in 1917 with the avowed objectives of acting on behalf of foreign correspondents in the United States, of keeping members in contact with contemporary life in America and elsewhere by entertaining distinguished Americans and foreigners, and of helping to foster good will between nations. Certain refreshingly candid comments on things American, at the dinner just mentioned, elicited the remark that talk like this would make good reading for Americans. The suggestion was repeated after a Forum of The Newspaper Guild of New York at which four members of the Association spoke on the work of foreign correspondents in the United States.

Thus there developed the idea of a book in which a group of correspondents should speak freely and frankly of their work here and of their impressions of the United States and its people. The United States press correspondents abroad have been writing books about the "inside" of Europe, Asia, and South America. So why not reverse the process, turn about being always fair play?

Certain officers and members of the Association helped to bring the editor into contact with those correspondents who have written the chapters that follow. While the Association's representatives have been thus helpful, and while all the contributors are members—a fact which guarantees their status as *bona fide* correspondents—the Association is in no way responsible for the publication of this book or for anything it contains. Each writer is participating as an individual, and speaks for himself only.

Foreign correspondents—whether representing a press bureau or a newspaper, whether writing spot news, interpretive comment or feature stories—are responsible for what people in other countries think of the United States. We Americans, of course, do not see those dispatches, letters and articles printed in great newspapers like the *Paris-Soir*, the *Buenos Aires Nacion*, the *Tokyo Hochi Shimbun*. Are the men and women who live among us "takin' notes" giving a true or false idea of the United States to their readers abroad? Leaving quite aside the matter of correctness, we Americans may well be curious about what these trained observers really think of us.

In this book we are being looked over not with the



casual glance of a tourist, but with the expert scrutiny of those whose business it is to observe and report. Individual foreign writers have, from time to time, with more or less candor, told what they think of us—from the lecture platform and over the radio, in magazine articles and in books. Now for the first time we are given an opportunity to compare a variety of such appraisals gathered together in a single volume.

The fifteen contributing writers may be taken as a fair cross-section of the tribe of foreign correspondents in the United States.

What a unique tribe that is! The correspondent comes to a foreign country with the eyes and ears of the people for whom he writes. But the longer he stays in the foreign land the less interested, excited, astonished he becomes. What he sees around him becomes normal. If he is a European, he becomes more and more an American. He might be compared to a ship moving very slowly from the shores of his native land toward the coast of America. He never quite reaches the desired haven, but he comes nearer and nearer to it—like one of those mathematic variables which constantly approach but never reach a given point. This continuing contact with both lands, this possession of a vantage point from which each can be surveyed, has the value of creating a certain impartiality, and it is this that makes the good foreign correspondent. He cannot be influenced directly either by the public for which he writes, or by the people of whom he writes.

And yet there is no single type of foreign correspond-

ent. He or she is distinctly an individual, generally with strongly marked personal traits. Consider the variety of nations represented in this book. Each writer has a background and experience all his own. Each has his own slant on life. One contributor, for instance, is an ex-Ambassador from a Latin American republic, another the leader of the feminist movement in a European country, another an ex-prize-fighter.

It was suggested at first in discussing this book that a definite topic be assigned to each contributor, thus assuring unity and continuity. But then it would have been the editor's book, not the correspondents'. Each writer has been left free to speak of that which most interests him or first occurs to him as he contemplates the American scene. Each chapter, then, is to be read by itself. No contributor has seen the work of any other before it appeared in print. So if any one chapter seems to be written in reply to any other, it is mere coincidence. The contributed chapters, it should be noted, are definitely journalistic impressions, sketches, not the product of intensive research or long study; they are not works of scholarship such as a number of these writers could turn out if given time and opportunity. In other words, this book is not meant to be a "survey" of the United States.

American readers will find themselves both criticized and complimented in these pages. They will note both doubts and fears regarding this nation's future. There are suggestions about solving certain of our national problems. One writer delves deeply into fundamental economic and social questions. Another skims lightly over

the more obvious and the more trivial manifestations of the national personality. One tries to sum up what his fellow countrymen have discovered here. Another is content with his own personal experiences. Some write on the basis of a residence here of many years, others of a few months. Several have something to say about the special problems that face the foreign correspondent here.

While there can be no summing up of views so miscellaneous, an American reader may on the whole find encouragement in the conclusions reached by certain of these observers, who take a detached and objective view of what is going on here. Perhaps we of the United States are taking our present troubles too despairingly, and are not sufficiently aware of the real progress we are making toward solving our problems.

It should be remembered that all but two or three of these correspondents habitually write in their own languages. In fact, three of the chapters were originally written in a foreign language and were translated into English.

The editor is grateful to each and every contributor. Each has been most cooperative, cheerfully accepting editorial suggestions, giving generously of time and thought.

It has been a pleasure to be associated with these correspondents in the preparation of this volume.

As one of them writes, there is a camaraderie of the men and women of the press that is proof against national rivalries and animosities, that surmounts differences of language and of race. Here is surely a strong force for the

fostering of international good will, even in these days when hopes for an ordered world have again been shattered.

All the material in this book, it may well be noted at this point, was written before the outbreak of war in Europe.

The hard pressure of circumstance has made the work of these contributors far from easy. The World's Fair and the international situation have piled additional labors upon the busy correspondents—and all during an oppressively hot summer. Serious illnesses of certain writers and sickness in the families of others have made the completion of certain chapters an almost heroic task. To these writers the editor feels that he owes a special debt of gratitude.

B. P. ADAMS

I

CARLOS DÁVILA

*Chile*

“You—and We—Americans”

CARLOS DÁVILA, born in Los Angeles, Chile, 1887, studied at the St. Louis English College of Valparaiso and the Lyceum of Concepción, later taking a course in law at the State University in Santiago. Founder and editor of the newspapers, *La Nación* and *Los Tiempos*, of Santiago, and the magazine, *Hoy*. Chilean Ambassador at Washington from 1927 to 1931. Provisional President of Chile for a few months in 1932. At present editor of *Editors Press Service*, news and feature syndicate in New York covering the entire newspaper field of Latin America.

# I

## YOU—AND WE—AMERICANS

By *Carlos Dávila*

### I

**N**O harder assignment could be given a newspaperman than that of covering the United States. And if he happens to be writing for Latin American consumption, his difficulties multiply a hundredfold.

It is no simple matter to report the news in countries where all information flows from the sacrosanct spigot of the official Press Office. But that is child's play compared with the task of gathering, assaying and collating news in the United States, where it comes from innumerable, inexhaustible and often contradictory sources.

The foreign correspondent is not the only journalist who must face this problem. One glance at metropolitan American dailies will reveal how intricate and delicate is the job of describing the national scene comprehensively and without bias. At times it is hard not to feel sorry for the American people—it must be so difficult for them to form an opinion on national problems.

To present a fair picture of the United States to Latin America during the forty years of "Big Stick," "Interventions," "Manifest Destiny" and "Martial Spirit" would

have been like trying satisfactorily to tell the story of public utilities in the Union in recent years. On one hand, Washington's policies had opened deep wounds in Latin American sensibilities. On the other, condemnation of "Yankee imperialism," resorted to as a sure-fire argument by certain politicians and writers down South, had exacerbated anti-American feelings. People did not want objective news dispatches—they wanted their American stories well seasoned.

But then the great depression hit the United States; and the Good Neighbor policy came into being. The two things changed the North American picture in the eyes of Latin America. To the friendliness created by Washington's new policy was added the sympathy aroused by the big crash. The peoples to the South realized that the Northern giant also could suffer from poverty and distress. So covering the United States became what it is now—merely a difficult task. The Good Neighbor policy and the depression served together to bring the more human image of the United States into a clearer focus for Latin Americans.

Paradoxically enough, the years of strained relations between the United States and America Hispana were also the years in which Uncle Sam became the dominant factor in the latter's trade, finance and investments. The widely held belief that trade goes hand in hand with friendly political ties was here refuted. A nation may be clenching one hand into a fist to shake in another's face, while passing orders and checks with the other. France and Germany did not entirely stop their mutual



trade even while the guns were roaring at the front in the last Great War. And despite verbal fulminations from one and the other side of the Maginot and Siegfried lines, the flow of commerce across the fortified border went on until recently with all the placidity of a Sunday village fair. America's heart is with the suffering Chinese, but the eyes of business are on Japan.

It would be unfair to lay too much of the blame for the former Latin American ill-will toward the United States at the door of Washington policies. It has always seemed to me that this hostility carried a large dosage of inferiority complex. Nothing in history justifies such a complex, as I have repeatedly made a point of showing in newspaper articles, on the lecture platform and as a diplomat. Latin America can look back with pride, and forward with confidence.

## II

It is forgotten in the United States, and often in the Southern countries too, that for three hundred years the limelight of the New World was focused on Iberian America. The imperial grandeur of present-day United States blurs our recollection of the past and our vision of the future.

Eighty-five years before Harvard University opened its doors, students were attending classes at three Latin American universities. Books and newspapers circulated in the Spanish colonies almost a century before they appeared in the United States. In the field of economics the

picture was much the same. Individual fortunes of half a billion dollars had been amassed in Latin America at a time when settlers in the Thirteen Colonies were still in the log-cabin stage.

Such was the picture until the eighteenth century, when progress began to slow down in Hispanic America and took long strides in the North. By 1840 the population of each of the two great divisions of the New World was approximately the same—about 18,000,000. Immigrants began pouring into the United States at the rate of 100,000 a year. Soon the influx reached huge proportions, and something like 40,000,000 aliens arrived in a century.

The great period of empire building had begun north of the Rio Grande. And so, as it were, while the dark Latin American body of the New World slowly fell asleep, this huge blond head of the United States grew steadily on its shoulders.

North and South took different routes in this New World, just as their historical backgrounds had been different. Latin America was conquered; the United States was settled. Down there harquebuses and swords were carried in the hands of the newcomers; up here, they held the plow and the Bible. Empire building was the goal of the Spaniards; home building was the aim of the Pilgrim Fathers. Within less than a century after discovery, the Spaniards had fought their way through half the continent. The Pilgrims were content to settle and develop their own little communities.

Fate decreed the reversal of these roles. The Spaniards became attached to the lands they had conquered, while

the Pilgrims took to the covered wagon and became, in turn, conquistadores of a new sort.

While the whole width of the continent was being brought under one flag and one constitution in the United States, the crumbling of the Spanish Empire was leaving as a legacy the "Disunited States" of Latin America.

Or, to sum it up, in the North a process of consolidation was going on; in the South, disintegration.

Generations passed before the United States, thus favored, finally overtook and outdistanced Latin America.

But now the situation has changed once more, and, in my opinion, a reversal of the trend is under way. Latin America is again developing faster than the United States.

In the twenty-five years following 1913 the rate of population increase in Latin America for the first time caught up with that of the United States. The percentage was forty-one in both regions, but the tendency in the South is toward an increase in the rate; in the United States, toward a decrease.

Immigration is still welcomed in Hispanic America. Both production and population are growing steadily. Production as a whole has not yet reached the point where it must be curtailed.

All signs in the United States point in the opposite direction. More people have been leaving the country than have been coming in during the last eight years. The fall in the birth rate alarms economists and sociologists.

When Abraham Lincoln estimated in 1862 that 251,000,000 people would inhabit his country by 1930, he based his guess on the average increase of the previous

decade. In 1930, the population of the United States was 122,000,000—less than half of the Lincoln forecast. It is estimated that if the present trend continues, there will be 20 per cent fewer children of up to ten years of age in 1940 than there were ten years ago. "More than one million empty desks in the elementary schools, and there may be ten million by 1960," was a recent newspaper complaint.

Nothing like that is yet in sight in Latin America. The crisis there today might be described as one of adjustment in expansion, while in the United States it is one of adjustment in contraction.

Thus the limelight is again shifting from the north to the south of the Rio Grande.

One striking fact emerges from this swing-back to upset the theory that the difference in development between Latin America and the United States is a matter of race. The race that ruled the Western Hemisphere from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century was the same one that let itself be overtaken by the Anglo-Saxon in the nineteenth century and is now returning to its proper place.

Neither is it a question of land, wealth, or geographical determinism. Latin America is richer and larger—the United States is only a little over a third as large in area.

And it would be fantastic to assume that something snapped in the minds of the men to the south during the transition from the colonial to the republican periods that made them less alert or intelligent. The most reasonable explanation of Latin America's stagnation lies, after all,

in political disintegration, while integration was the process in the United States during the republican period.

A reversal of this trend has lately come to our attention, pointing to a not very united United States. President Roosevelt has already asked whether this is one nation or forty-eight, showing the need for thinking and legislating in terms of the whole nation. But in recent years there sprang up the "port of entry" idea, thought up by Kansas; what amounted to actual tariffs were enacted by many states; one state's milk ceased to be good in another; a dozen states eat only their own hens' eggs, and there is cigarette smuggling from New Jersey into New York. The tendency toward disintegration having been brought to a ridiculous point by state zeal, it now seems that the danger has passed. In a typically American way the people are laughing this trend into oblivion and the authorities are taking steps to put a definite end to it. Two hundred thousand American couples a year may still be divorced in accordance with forty-nine different laws, and 175,000 separate government units may continue enriching the nation's collection of laws and tax lists, but no danger is extant that could fundamentally threaten the purpose of the Founding Fathers "to form a more perfect Union."

As time passes and the economic problem rears its head menacingly everywhere, the progress of the Latin republics becomes more significant. It seems to me that Stuart Chase was a little hasty when he spoke of "continental economic units" in his recent book and asserted that

figures relating to South America "were not worth presenting." The world's greatest reserves of iron ore are in South America; Chile and Brazil alone have more than all the rest of the world put together. The same could be said of oil. One-fourth of the world's copper comes from South America, and Chile alone holds almost 40 per cent of the world's reserves. The rapidly increasing exports of Latin America amount at present to 13 per cent of the world's exports, a similar share coming from the United States.

It is significant that in recent years Latin America's exports have exceeded Uncle Sam's sales abroad. True, this 13 per cent of world exports coming from Latin America represents 27 per cent of that region's production, compared with only 7 or 8 per cent in the case of the United States. But this, instead of detracting from the importance of Latin America in the world's economy, rather adds to it.

Under present conditions, it is doubtful whether the economic power of nations can still be measured by their exports of manufactures and consumption goods, rather than by their sales of raw materials. The evidence, indeed, points in the other direction. Dependence on the export of manufactured articles is a dangerous thing in a world where all nations are racing toward industrial self-sufficiency. In Latin America this process has been the most noteworthy and perhaps the least publicized feature of the last ten years. Argentina has more than doubled its industrial plant and a dozen other Latin American

countries have expanded theirs from 60 to 80 per cent.

That the United States is "more powerful *industrially* than Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy combined" may be a source of weakness, not of strength in international economics. Perhaps herein lies in part the explanation of the amazing paradox that the richest nation in the world should have the largest supply of idle money and idle men.

A hundred years ago, when manufactured goods accounted for more than half of the imports of the United States and less than 10 per cent of its exports, this country's economic future was, of course, brighter than now, when these figures have been more than reversed.

The fact that the world economic position of Latin America today is similar to that of the United States years ago explains why the immediate economic future of the former is so bright. Howard Trueblood, in a recent report published by the Foreign Policy Association, puts it very aptly in these words: "Latin America furnishes so many commodities essential to this country's living standard and to its economic structure as a whole that imports from Latin America are far more essential to the United States than exports (of the United States) to that region." The relative importance of raw material vs. manufactured goods exports is thus confirmed by Mr. Trueblood's findings. These "essential" imports from Latin America now represent one-third of what Latin America exports and almost one-fourth of the total imports of the United States.

However, the United States looms so mighty on the New World horizon that Latin America can only with difficulty overcome its awe.

Yes, Iberian America is larger than the United States, and its population is about the same. The population of the United States and that of Latin America both represent 6 per cent of the world figure, but the former is settled on less than 2 per cent of the world's area while the latter is scattered over 15 per cent of it. Yes, Anglo-Saxon and Latin America have each about the same share of world exports. Eight per cent of the world imports come into Latin America, 13 per cent into the United States. Those global figures, however, lose much of their meaning when we realize that there are more telephones in New York City alone than in all the twenty republics to the South, that New York City's budget equals that of seventeen Latin American nations put together, and that one single New York department store sells more in one year than all the five Central American Republics.

But these figures showing the economic greatness of the United States are so familiar to the world that they frequently confuse the judgment of foreigners as to what the American nation really is. While admiring its wealth they forget its soul.

### III

The poetry of Walt Whitman and Emerson interpreted the United States more faithfully than the philosophy of William James. At least so I often thought, even



## YOU—AND WE—AMERICANS

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before I came to this land twelve years ago. Since then I have traveled over nearly the whole country. I have talked with people of all classes and occupations, and the result has been to confirm my impression that there is an American ideal, chiefly concerned with human dignity, that cannot be measured by any material yardstick.

It has been said that the philosophy of James embodies the supposedly utilitarian and pragmatic spirit of the United States, and this has been repeated so often that people in Latin America have finally come to believe it. But the real America is that "intrepid" nation which Whitman heard singing "the beauty of independence," his "land of unprecedented faith, God's faith."

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A To me James was definitely a product of British and German influence on American thinking. Said on Latin American soil, this might seem a heresy, so much has the American soul been caricatured; but I think I can here assert my belief that this nation, despite its avowed realism in politics, is essentially spiritual and even sentimental.

3 I believe that therein lies its reserve strength, upon which it may fall back in the present—or any—crisis.

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The great difficulty in ascertaining what the future offers to the United States derives, in my opinion, from the wide gap between what the American spirit really is and what it is believed to be.

The weak spot of the New Deal is precisely this, that it has concerned itself more with the material than with the spiritual resources of the country. It is true, though, that in 1933 the New Deal scored its chief successes in the

spiritual reawakening it gave the nation, and that recently it seems to have turned somewhat in that direction again.

The existence of that weak spot goes to prove that the misunderstanding of the American soul is not limited to the foreign observer—that America herself does not quite know her own soul. Political leaders hold aloft the lure of material benefits, while people are anxiously waiting for a guide to lead them out of the spiritual morass into which they have sunk. I never heard any talk about “economic security” when I traveled all through the country before 1929. Since I returned in 1932 I have heard nothing but that. Everyone lives in fear of being eliminated from the “economic cycle,” as Einstein put it. The panic of the depression seems to have taken possession of men’s souls and to have broken that spirit on which your national greatness was founded in the days when obstacles, instead of frightening people, gave them the incentive to overcome them—a dangerous mood, since all great empires of the past perished, we should remember, when the people lost their nerve.

The economic problems of the United States have no purely economic solution. Never was Franklin D. Roosevelt nearer being the great leader this country has been waiting for than when he said that the nation’s foremost need is “government with a soul.” Material gains alone cannot unify the land. Economic problems divide it fatally into classes, zones, “belts,” and manifold fields of production, distribution and consumption. The interests of these groups are definitely antagonistic. To satisfy them all would be an undertaking too big even for the huge

economic potentialities of the United States. A measure of self-denial is the first step toward national unity.

For almost a hundred years political education has followed the opposite theory. Now the fruits are being harvested in the shape of irreconcilable demands from pressure groups, and of factional strife.

The total may be equal to the sum of its component parts in mathematics. But the application of this to politics may be fatal. Politicians are in the habit of estimating national opinion by putting together the opinions of the pressure groups. Commonplace definitions of democracy have been hammered into us with so much insistence that we have come to believe that the duty of a leader is to take the people where they want to go, not where they ought to go.

This, in my opinion, is an abdication of leadership. And leadership is just as needful in a democracy as in those systems which proclaim it as the fountainhead of political life.

Catering—or, to put it bluntly, pandering—to public opinion has reached absurd proportions through the solicited letters and telegrams to Washington and the “straw votes” or “polls” that are continually being conducted. A politician—being a man who, by the nature of his calling, has to keep an ear to the ground all the time—now is inclined or forced to wait for a straw vote to show which way the wind is blowing before committing himself. It does not matter that such polls may be taken under the pressure of temporary emotions, when there has been no time for reflection. Indeed, a United States senator re-

cently exclaimed, "Why don't we adjourn and let the country be run according to the way these public polls say the people want it?"

"I am your leader and therefore I follow you," a politician once said to his audience. If that made people laugh when it was first heard, it would not now.

For we are witnessing these days a world tragedy the origin of which may be traced to that which I would dare call an exaggeration of the representative régime in England. A wave of pacifism and disarmament ran over England after the World War—a generous and humanitarian feeling, perhaps, but one that was incompatible with the existence of the Empire itself. A straw vote revealed eleven million ballots in favor of a policy favoring the League and disarmament. Leaders of all political parties let themselves be softly carried by the crest of that wave, comfortably transmuting the deep sentiment for peace into votes and parliamentary seats. There the British leaders abdicated their leadership and paved the way for Munich, a new war, and perhaps a crisis of the Christian era.

I would like to be wrong in this judgment. But that episode invariably comes to my mind when I try to analyze the democratic machinery of the United States and find signs of a similar tendency.

#### IV

The United States has everything at stake in a crisis threatening democracy; everything, since the Union is a threefold democracy—a democracy of individuals, a de-

mocracy of states, a democracy of races. It is unfortunate that democratic processes carry within themselves slowness, inefficiency and waste; it would be worse if they should be burdened with these new deformities which would add too many handicaps to the political system at a time when it faces the crisis of capitalism.

Almost by definition, democracy means doubt. Its foundation is debate, whence may come ideas for improvements. On the other hand, totalitarianism is almost synonymous with certainty. When a totalitarian ruler believes himself to be a depositary of certainty he feels under an obligation to impose that certainty upon the people he governs. Well, too much doubt on the part of the democratic rulers may be as bad as too much certainty on the part of the totalitarians.

In the face of urgent economic problems, I am afraid that both the people and the leaders have become opportunists, thinking only in terms of emergency, and even in terms of fractional emergency. This political hedonism may spell the bankruptcy of statesmanship.

Sound economic thinking is a foremost need of today. But this calls for a thorough study of economic theory, and in the United States people have been taught to jeer at theories. Therefore, it is hard not only to have any national economic thinking but to have any national thinking at all.

Speaking of national economic thinking, I cannot help emphasizing what in my opinion is the most important economic achievement of this country. The extraordinary thing about the United States is not that it owns and

builds more than three-fourths of the automobiles and radios of the world; or that it produces and consumes about 60 per cent of all the petroleum; or that it uses almost 50 per cent of the world's rubber; or that it manufactures more than a third of the world's steel; or that it develops a third of the world's electric power; or even that it moves more than 40 per cent of the world's freight over its fantastically developed rail and highway networks.

No. The one outstanding fact about the United States is the translation of all those things into human values—it is the high standard of living. Despite the now fashionable juggling of statistics to show that one-third of the nation is “ill-fed, ill-clothed and ill-housed,” despite *Tobacco Road* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, the simple fact is that the people of the United States live in greater comfort than any other. The United States is the nation that in the shortest time and in the most satisfactory manner has made the highest standard of living available to the greatest number of people.

This is an achievement unique in history. Empires in the past have left behind lofty engineering and architectural monuments, have enriched kings and nobles. But never have these “great” eras given a “better life” to the masses. Ancient Rome may have had the equivalent of modern plumbing and central heating in the palaces of the proconsuls, but there were no “improvements” or labor-saving gadgets in the slimy hovels of the plebeians. The prosperity, such as it was, was never passed along.

Incessant repetition has hammered into people's minds

that this abundance they enjoy in twentieth-century America has been brought about by free competition and rugged individualism, when it might well be said that it was brought about in spite of these.

What has recently happened in the United States should make us think how much more economically stable the country would have been if the system of private enterprise had been tempered by a larger degree of co-operation, or—gingerly using the fearsome word—collectivization. This applies equally well to Latin America.

The entire New World entered into its republican era believing that there was a definite economic liberal system inseparable from political democracy and republicanism. Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and Herbert Spencer's *The Proper Sphere of Government* gave the new nations the dogma that free forces are at play in the economic life of nations, which by themselves and without any governmental action can guide all activities involving money, trade and industry through the proper channels, bringing the "greatest good to the greatest number."

This laissez-faire doctrine has been a subtle, invisible but powerful tyranny oppressing the Western Hemisphere. Governments may build railroads and highways. They may dispose of lives and property in court. They may raise armies and plunge nations into wars. But they are not to be allowed to take a hand in production, trade and industry to make the best possible use of the wealth of the community, simply because Adam Smith and Herbert Spencer so instructed our constitution makers and legislators. The law of supply and demand was to be su-

preme and bear all responsibilities. It was an American teacher who asked his pupils whether, in case he pushed one of them out of a tenth-floor window, the blame for the victim's death should be placed on the pusher or on the law of gravity.

The basic problem facing the Western Hemisphere today is that of proving that political liberalism must not necessarily be forever tied up to the so-called "liberal" economics. The next stage in the history of the New World will be, it seems to me, along the road to socialization. And, contrary to the general belief, it will not mean taking a new and hitherto untraveled road. It will be merely a return to the systems and ideas upon which our nations were nourished in their cradles.

Under colonial rule Latin America had a semi-collective legal system, with a strongly regimented economy. We had eight-hour-day labor laws in Spanish America in the seventeenth century. Communal lands were the normal thing, not the exception. Many volumes could be filled with the collectivist regulations contained in the monumental Laws of the Indies.

The British colonies, too, had collectivizing elements in their economy. But the time came, both in the North and in the South, when money began to be more important than land, when the Industrial Revolution came from Europe, and when the "economist dictators," with their liberal economic revolution, put an end to the socializing influence of the State.

Democracy did not create the capitalism of international finance, nor should it be blamed for the fact that



large production and better distribution of material goods, at least in the New World, have not been possible. That responsibility must be placed on the shoulders of her ally, the liberal economics that imposed its dictates upon the infant republics. That is why our democratic régimes in America brought us to a point near political equality, yet distant from economic equality.

When people here see national economy prostrate, when they see that it could not be revived by the billions poured from the government coffers in Washington in the last six years to prime the pump and increase purchasing power, when they are haunted by the specter of idle millions of men and dollars, they conclude that the country, not the economic system, is failing them. Because a century of education and propaganda has engraved in their minds the idea that the nation is irrevocably identified with that system.

## v

People have been brought up to look with such horror on the word "socialization" that they cannot admit for a moment that it offers anything worth trying. Yet the country has made a very considerable start in that direction during the last fifty years. To begin with, monopolies, chain stores, great corporations, have "depersonalized" business. For the employees of such organizations as well as for the man in the street it would make no difference if at the head of a gigantic company there should sit one day a representative of the State instead of a Mr. Sloan.

Neither should it make a great deal of difference for

the economics of the country as a whole. The number of Americans who are really impelled to work by the profit motive, which is supposed to be the animating force in the competitive capitalist system of production, is surprisingly small. More than nine-tenths of the nation work for salaries or non-monetary considerations. The best-run institutions are not profit-making anyway—the Army and the Navy, the universities and the foundations, the civil service and the churches.

A moment will come when it will not be possible to continue the production curtailment for which this epoch will be condemned. If there ever was any justification for the traditional system of production for profit, it lay in the fact that indeed there were profits. There will not be any justification at all when the State has to intervene in order artificially to maintain those profits.

Drastic reforms will be necessary both in this country and in others to reconcile technological advance with the capitalist system of private enterprise. One or the other will have to be checked.

In the United States the trend has been, and still is, toward some form of socialization which may be arrived at by gradual evolution and which may be strikingly original. The advance of the United States along this route is marked by two essential characteristics, which this process will have to make the most of rather than suppress—mass production and high wages.

That is the “American Way” if there ever was one. The idea, so much bandied about these days, of breaking up big business and industry to return to the small individual

shop is un-American. High wages and low costs are but the offspring of mass production. In spite of all that may be said to the contrary, this can still be accomplished. Instead of rising, costs per unit have declined, even in the last few years, in those industries that have raised wages.

I think it was Lenin who once said that there would not be any communism in the United States as long as Henry Ford was alive. He meant undoubtedly that as long as the United States concentrates on producing more and more at increasingly lower prices and higher salaries, communism could not hope to grow roots here. Which should be food for thought for those who favor the opposite policy of producing less, at higher prices and lower wages.

Anyhow, there are at play in this country surprisingly strong forces, not only emotional but economic, which wreak havoc with the most dogmatic theories, both orthodox and revolutionary. When almost one-third of the population depends directly or indirectly on government money, it is difficult to keep on believing that a system of private enterprise prevails. On the other hand, David Ricardo and Karl Marx would have no easy task in supporting their "iron law of wages" theory in face of the general trend of rising wages and living standards in this country.

These American characteristics continue to focus the eyes of the world upon this country in the hope of discovering a solution of the social problem of the times, giving security and plenty within the framework of political freedom. The proletariat, I believe, never has been

marching toward a dictatorship in this country. It is, rather, on its way to vanish in the general upward leveling of universal well-being. No matter how much Americans like to dramatize individual miseries and group calamities in these days of self-criticism, regardless of the degree of economic stagnation that is approaching, the American human record is enough to constitute an honorable chapter in the annals of the New World and to indicate a new course for the future. Apparently only a slight pressure from the political side would suffice to make this process continue, depressions or no depressions, on its logical course toward economic democracy.

This political leadership is materializing already, feebly but clearly. The New Deal is a step in that direction, no matter how short it may be. Its objective was, in the words of its chief protagonist, to "take the 'r' out of revolution." And perhaps it succeeded in that.

## VI

I admire President Roosevelt more for what I see in him as a humanitarian thinker than for what circumstances have allowed him to say or do as a politician. He knows, I presume, that this country is not yet sufficiently indoctrinated with the theories implicit in the New Deal. The people have been led to accept whatever brings immediate relief, but not what implies a change in the economic or political pattern. That was clearly shown in the Supreme Court episode.

A great majority of the people have assented to the

New Deal, but they still think in terms of the Old Deal. In politics, more than in any other field, the poet's conception of the living force of dead ideas finds ready application.

The New Deal has been an expression of the "gradualism" that has typified the American way. It marks the least violent transition possible from the absolute concept of private enterprise to social control of economic processes. It is not so new a deal as we may think, either. It was coming and it had a definite shape under the Hoover administration. As far as I can gather, Hoover was the first President of the United States who, faced with an economic crisis, realized that the government should do something about it besides letting it run its course. That this initiative should come from the rugged personality who wrote *American Individualism* and maintains his faith in it, is typical of American realism in politics.

Of course, those initial mumblings of a nascent New Deal lacked the amplitude, the daring and the éclat of the Roosevelt opinion-conquering pronouncements. Whatever the political destiny of the New Deal may be, its fundamental idea will remain; it will be a conception of the new function of the State, at least in times of emergency. But I do not think that the reach of this experiment in national thinking will stop there. I believe the idea will gain ground that this State intervention should not wait for an emergency to force private interests to yield to public interest in the economic field. Over two hundred billion dollars in national income were lost in the ten years since the depression began in 1929. The waste, in human terms, has been appalling.

Whether the New Deal has brought relief or not, it occurs to me that the principle will ripen in this country that some such intervention, not occasional but permanent, of the State in the economic life of the nation will be necessary to mitigate the havoc wrought by these recurring crises. The fact that on this occasion no firm action was taken until the perils of the situation became plainly evident explains in part the confusion created by the new policy. In Latin America a New Deal would not give rise to so much perturbation, because, in the majority of our countries, nine-tenths of their economic possibilities are still awaiting development. The State can proceed, within that vast margin, to revitalize production under collective methods without affecting the remaining tenth that at present is in private hands. In countries with a mature economy, like the United States, government intervention affects almost the whole of a private system which is a going machine geared to infinite interdependency.

The alternative would be the total substitution of one system for the other, but that would be revolution, which in the United States would be spelled with a very large capital R.

The New Deal not only collided with this damaged, sensitive economic mechanism, but collided also with the political party system. Although some symptoms of political defeatism may be detected in the country, tending to deprive the parties of the people's confidence, their structure is still sufficiently strong to enable them to impose their decisions at the polls. In reality the American

people have not enjoyed as complete a freedom to express their will on public problems as is generally supposed. They can discuss them freely and loudly, but, come election day, the choice is limited to one of two tickets.

Such political defeatism is not confined exclusively to this democracy; it is general throughout the New World. Parties, created for the purpose of organizing the people's representation in the government, have developed their own interests, which are not always those of the people or the State. Although this political defeatism is a pre-Fascist mental attitude, signs do not seem to point in that direction here. The middle class in America, far from being a promoter of Fascism, as it has been elsewhere, seems destined to be a cushion in this crisis. In fact, although it does not harbor great faith in either of the two parties, it keeps them alternately in power. Until a short time ago it seemed to have been seized by a panic that was drawing it away from the New Deal and closer to the "economic royalist" bandwagon.

Above all, there are signs that the fundamental idea of the New Deal will prevail, stimulating the cooperative, or perhaps collectivist, processes of national evolution. And if the idea that State intervention must be a permanent, and not an emergency measure, succeeds in taking root in the public consciousness, all may be arranged by a simple process of change in nomenclature. Nothing was held to be as un-American as the dole; it was called "relief" and readily accepted. There would not be any unemployment in the country if only the New Deal creations would cease to be considered emergency steps and would

be referred to by different names. Germany knows as "Labor Front" what in the United States is called "CCC" or "WPA"; there it is a wheel in the normal machinery of the country.

It may be that this evolution will take place before the eyes of present-generation Americans. What is perhaps the world's most rational democracy has been functioning here with fair success. It is a system having curious and at the same time transcendental characteristics. It is full of contradictions, because it borrows something from the systems and preoccupations of all the nations that contributed to its formation. But it has, like a mosaic, an essential and astounding unity that bears the stamp of a movement toward a loftier form of social organization. Above all, the American System is an "ever unfinished process." The American Way is not a static concrete road. American Intuition could very well be another name for it.

This conclusion is not prompted by a Pollyanna-like optimism. I believe that the thoughtful realism of the American nation can be trusted to find the means of adjusting its political system to new economic conditions—the problem of today. American political thinking, after a long, long vacation, shows signs of coming back to work.



II

RAOUL DE ROUSSY DE SALES

*France*

“What Is This Aloofness?”

RAOUL DE ROUSSY DE SALES, born in Paris, 1896, educated in Paris and in England. Musical and literary critic for French and British papers and magazines. With the American Red Cross in 1918; Assistant Secretary General of the League of Red Cross Societies from 1922 to 1931. Came to the United States in 1932, covered New Deal for the *Revue de Paris* in 1932. Special Correspondent *Paris-Midi* 1934, and later of *Paris-Soir*, writing under the name of Jacques Fransales. Became chief of the American Bureau of *Paris-Soir*, in 1935; American correspondent of *l'Europe Nouvelle* in 1936, and Diplomatic Correspondent of Havas News Agency in Washington and New York in 1937. President of the Association of Foreign Press Correspondents in the United States. Regular contributor to the *Atlantic Monthly*, and lecturer. Received Strassburger Award for writings "which have served the interests of Franco-American friendship," in 1936. Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.

## II

### *WHAT IS THIS ALOOFNESS?*

*By Raoul de Roussy de Sales*

#### I

THE longer a European lives in the United States the more he realizes that, contrary to popular belief, nations and continents are tending more and more to cultivate their aloofness from one another. In other words, they prefer to become proud of what makes them different rather than to make an effort to retain and appreciate what makes them alike. This tendency is as prevalent in America as anywhere else. It is the product of the only surviving belief common to all mankind, and is called Nationalism.

To analyze modern nationalism would require a volume. All that need to be pointed out here are two of its aspects: first, that it is universal and stronger than any other force, including religion, the instinct of self-preservation and especially human reason; secondly, that, being recognized by all men as good, or at least necessary, there seems to be no way—in any predictable future—either to transform it into a factor of peace and international understanding or to find any substitute for it.

There are various aspects of nationalism, of course. To the Germans, for instance, it is an expression of the dynamic mood and world-domination dream which have found expression in the Nazi movement. For the democracies it is a manifestation of their instinct of self-preservation. In both instances, however, one finds the same fundamental desire to emphasize differences and deprecate similarities.

The disrupting force of nationalism such as we know it today is so great that modern facilities of communication and the shortening of distances, instead of checking it, seem rather to give it more virulence and more reality. The truth is that no material device, such as the radio, rapid dissemination of news, or the fact that it takes less than forty-eight hours to fly from here to Europe, has any effect on this propensity to increase the psychological gap which separates peoples. People, it is true, know more about one another, but it is doubtful whether real understanding has increased. All that seems to have happened is that facilities to reach one another have only served to increase the desire of each nation to be distinct from all others, to maintain its idiosyncrasies, to resist outside influences and—in a general way—to view with a varying amount of hostility everything “foreign.”

In the case of America and Europe the misunderstanding and latent hostility differs from that which now divides the nations of Europe, because the political and social structure of America, its history, and the conception it has of its mission in the world, place it in a position which can be compared with that of no other country.

Being an American is a very different thing from being a Frenchman, a German or a Spaniard. Neither France nor Germany, nor Spain, was formed by the influx of foreign people; or if so, it was too long ago to be consciously remembered. The American nation, on the other hand, was created by people who left Europe either for the sake of adventure, or to make money faster, or to flee unpleasant conditions. Whatever their motive, they carried with them what might be called the "prodigal son" complex. Having left their native land and their homes, they found themselves in a dual state of mind toward the country they had left—hostility and nostalgia at the same time. Gradually, they and their descendants had to find some sort of noble justification for electing to leave the place where they were born. Thus developed one of the fundamental dogmas of Americanism: that America is a nation formed by people of all races and creeds who left Europe because they wanted to live in a land of freedom, of unlimited opportunity and greater happiness. By natural contrast, Europe appeared—and still appears today—as the land of tyranny, backwardness and decadence. It is also a continent torn by perennial wars and revolutions, and one from which dangerous ideas originate. In other words, Europe seems to be a permanent peril to the integrity of America, and Americanism seems to be more and more based on a will to resist not only entanglements and wars in Europe, but also all its influences.

In spite of the now well established belief that the doctrine of no-entanglements goes back to Washington's Farewell Address, it would seem that this modern concep-

tion of Americanism as a protest against Europe is fairly recent. In Washington's days neither Americans nor anybody else had the slightest fear of foreign influences and "isms." Quite the contrary. Men in those days believed that ideas were common property to all civilized mankind, and that they had nothing to do with geographic boundaries. Although it took weeks to cross the Atlantic, Washington and his contemporaries were eager to absorb European ideas, and Europe, for its part, glorified the American Revolution as marking beneficent progress in thought and in political achievement.

Washington's idea seems to have been that *permanent* alliances were dangerous for the maintenance of the independence of a nation which was then very weak and very much exposed to the preying politics of European rival powers. Having just triumphed over England with the help of France, he could not have thought that the United States would never have to associate themselves, temporarily, with one or the other of the European powers again.

Nevertheless, and whatever Washington meant, the doctrine of isolation and aloofness is now traced to him, and the fact that this fundamental element of contemporary Americanism is placed under his aegis, so to speak, makes it all the more sacred and also all the more difficult to analyze.

## II

After living eight years in this country, I must admit that, in spite of a good deal of reading and study, I am

still unable to account for many of the contradictions which make up the American point of view toward the outside world—especially Europe. It would seem as if Americans themselves, in spite of their sincerity and their faculty of clear thinking, have not been able to reach the roots of the dilemma which has confronted them since the beginning of the century. It has now become once more extremely acute, but it is always the same, and can be summed up in one question: What should be the attitude of the United States toward Europe?

In the matter of participating in a European war, for instance, one has the queer feeling that if someone could offer a new vocabulary to describe the various emotions which disturb the reason and the conscience of most Americans, the dilemma would be solved. Such words as "neutrality," "isolationism," "no-entanglements," etc., have acquired such a variety of meanings that each individual has come to doubt that they correspond to any reality.

For the French, of course, and for all other European people, the problem is simple—distressingly simple. It can be summed up as follows: If the Americans believe, as they so loudly and persistently proclaim, that Nazi Germany is a menace to what we call civilization and especially to free democratic institutions, why don't they help us now? On the other hand, if they think that they will not be in danger until the British fleet is destroyed and the Germans established in Canada, why all this indignation and shouting before the danger is really at their door?

Thus goes French logic, to which no satisfactory an-

swer can ever be given by French correspondents in America for the simple reason that every action or attitude of America requires each time a very long explanation and that no newspaper is going to stand for a ten-thousand-word cable of subtle analysis every time something happens here which affects Europe.

So the correspondent is reduced to simplifications which simplify nothing. He has to say, for instance: "It would seem today, after the latest speech of Mr. Roosevelt, that the isolationist sentiment has suffered a setback." He knows that this is practically meaningless, because there is no such thing as a solid and organized group of isolationists in America, and neither is there a recognizable group of people who are wholly anti-isolationist. What there is, in fact, is a state of chronic indetermination, a constant conflict in the American nation—and most of the time in the soul of each American—between two tendencies which, when analyzed, are far from being as clear as they seem when such words as *isolationism* or *intervention* are used.

In talking to many Americans, and in reading the newspapers, I have come to the conclusion that a pure *isolationist* is as rare as a pure *interventionist*. Among my own friends who are patient enough to discuss these questions, I have found that their degree of isolationism varies from day to day and from hour to hour according to the news. Those who have a perfectly fixed point of view and who know definitely what they would like the United States to do right now and in the future are extremely rare. But even those give the impression of having had to strug-



gle with themselves in order to suppress the dualism which is natural to them.

For my own convenience, I have taken as a premise that it is absolutely impossible to be an American without being somewhat of an isolationist, it being understood that by this word one means: (1) that the historical attitude of the United States is one of permanent opposition and diffidence toward Europe as a whole; (2) that the dream of America is to develop itself independently of the rest of the world, and that though every fact points to a contrary trend, this does not make the dream less strong; (3) and that all Americans, like all other human beings, prefer peace to war, and recoil therefore from anything which might bring war nearer. Incidentally, the French, the English and the Germans are all isolationists in this last sense, or would be if they could.

In other words, this aspect of isolationism is not a particularly American trait. Every nation in the world would like to be left alone by other nations. What is peculiarly American, however, is that such a natural tendency can be made the basis of a doctrine and that so many efforts should be made to make it compulsory.

### III

This being said, the isolationists may be classified as follows:

(1) Those who believe that the mission of America is to pursue its course as if no other people lived on this planet. They think that America needs nothing from the

outside world, either materially or culturally, and that whatever comes from abroad is bad and should be eliminated. They would make great trade sacrifices in order to build a new Chinese wall. They consider the rest of the world, and especially Europe, as a nuisance, and are perfectly willing to take the long-range chance of letting civilization crash (whatever that really means), provided it is preserved in this country for the benefit of 130 million men and women.

(2) Those who believe that it does not matter much to America who wins or loses in the next war. They see in it nothing but one more struggle between Franco-British and German imperialisms and profess indifference to the outcome. They do not think that it will affect the fate of America one way or the other. All they wish is to remain in such a position that America will not suffer economically and will be able to pursue trade relations with whoever wins the war or retains supremacy in the outside world.

(3) Those who believe that England and France are indeed the "first lines of defense" of this continent, but who think that, as long as it is impossible to predict the future course of events, one might as well hope that England and France will succeed in restraining the German will to expansion. If they don't, it will be time to do something about it.

(4) Those who think that war is never a necessity but always some sort of sin. These, of course, are more properly called the pacifists, but their efforts are aimed in the same direction as those of the isolationists. Their attitude is

the condemnation of anyone who fights, and their policy seems to be based on the presumption that the Americans might be tempted to join the war just as some people are tempted to drink. Their influence is great, and responsible, I believe, for the fact that the debates over the Neutrality Act have resembled much more the quarrels over Prohibition than a discussion of national policy.

(5) There are those—and they are the majority—who, having taken definite sides, would like to help the Allies, provided the steps taken in that direction did not carry them into direct participation. They want to stop Hitler by providing England and France with everything under the sun except American flesh for German guns.

All these shades of opinion, and many others probably, contribute to form what is loosely called the isolationist sentiment. It is these variations and nuances that the foreign correspondent must constantly follow, weigh, and, if possible, account for.

#### IV

What complicates matters more is the fact that public opinion in the United States is seldom unified and seldom to be found in one definite spot. Correspondents working in Europe have a fairly simple job compared to ours, as far as that is concerned. All European countries being highly centralized, the best way to find out what they think is to find out what the government thinks, and if you want to have a complete picture, to ascertain the point of view of the opposition. A few key men in each European country will give you a fairly reliable picture

of that country's attitude at the moment and even enable you to predict what its future policies may be.

Not so in the United States, where policies, especially in the field of foreign affairs, are always the unpredictable result of a series of trends and forces which may or may not be reflected by the government. To believe that the Executive, the diplomatic services, or Congress actually determine American policy is a fallacy. The principle of checks and balances is so natural to the American temperament that it is always easier to describe the conflicts which oppose the various branches of government than it is to say what line will actually be followed in the end.

Moreover, public opinion has a tendency to express itself through such channels as organized groups and leagues, the relative influence of which varies constantly. As an instance, there is no doubt that the several peace societies which constantly manifest their activity in Washington are very influential, but whether this influence corresponds to the actual strength of their membership or not is impossible to ascertain.

One cannot rely, either, with any safety on the opinion expressed by the press or even on the scientific polls which are now so much in favor. No doubt they offer the best indication available on trends of public opinion, but they cannot predict whether these trends will translate themselves into any corresponding action once they have passed through the machinery of the lobbies and been modified or completely transformed by the competent branches of government.

Add sectional differences to this, and you may under-

stand that there is practically no method by which a foreign correspondent can ever be sure of giving a true picture of American opinion, much less predict the course of its probable evolution. All that can really be done is to establish a few fairly fixed points—such as the chronic tendency to be against Europe and the contradictory urge to intervene in its troubles in order to secure a real peace for the whole world—and to note from day to day how far or how near public opinion seems to be from these two poles.

But this, needless to state, is far from satisfactory to the readers of a European newspaper, especially in these days. An unscrupulous newspaperman who would wish to content his readers and his editor might take a definite stand once for all. He might decide, for instance, that the United States is surely headed for intervention or, on the contrary, that the war of 1914–1918 was definitely the last one in which the American people were to take an active part in European affairs. He would have a fifty-fifty chance of being right.

But the correspondent who actually tries, with a minimum of intellectual honesty, to report what he sees and feels to be the probable truth, is bound to cause increasing disappointment and confusion in the minds of his readers. These may finally reach one of two conclusions: either that the correspondent is a hopeless fool, or that Americans are the most unpredictable, unreliable, and unexplainable people in the world.

And yet the responsibility of the European correspondent in the United States these days is a very great

one. In spite of the fact that he seldom has anything to report which is as dramatic as the sensational events which have gone on in Europe in the last five or six years and which have heightened so much—and justly so—the stature of the American correspondent, what is cabled and written about America these days has much greater effect on Europe than anything written from Europe has on America. Or, to put it another way: even an important event in Europe does not have immediate repercussion in America, but even a slight modification of the United States attitude toward the European conflict may translate itself into the most momentous changes of policy over there. To take a practical and hypothetical example: the substitution of Mr. Herriot for Mr. Daladier at the head of the French Government obviously would not cause a great stir in America, but if Mr. X suddenly replaced President Roosevelt, the effect on France, and therefore on the whole course of events in Europe, would be immeasurable.

It may be said that the reason for this is obvious: The European countries need America, if not as an ally at least as a sympathizer. This is true and so self-evident that I am always astonished when I hear or read that the European nations are unutterably selfish, if not slightly criminal, when they try to rally American public opinion to their cause. All men try to justify their cause in the eyes of other men, and very few are disinterested enough not to seek for the friendship and backing of a powerful and rich neighbor if they can. Nations are like individuals in this respect.

## v

But it seems to me that there is another reason for the fact that what happens in America—the slightest change of mood or policy—appears to be so much more important to Europe than the greatest events that take place in Europe are to America. And that is the national American desire already mentioned, to resist and repudiate as dangerous and corrosive not only European entanglements but European ideas and influences. The force of this sentiment is so great, indeed, that I do not believe anything like it could be found in any other country. I may add that it has nothing to do with the problem of whether the United States will or will not participate in a European war, or whether the American people sympathize with one side or the other. It is much more fundamental than that, and it is impossible to open a newspaper or a magazine without finding expressions of it.

One of its most interesting and striking manifestations is the attitude of Americans toward what is called *propaganda*.

Whether the activities which are classified under that name are propaganda or not, and whether propaganda is or is not effective, matters little. What is interesting, however, is to note the quasi-psychopathic reactions which the thought of propaganda produces in practically every American. I use the word *psychopathic* deliberately, because it seems to me that this emphasis on the power of propaganda and its possible effects on the American peo-

ple has taken on the proportions of a mass-obsession which cannot be accounted for rationally.

Propaganda has indeed become a very important weapon for the furtherance of modern nationalist or ideological interests. Every country uses it and every country is subject to it. France, for instance, has been a hotbed of Fascist, Hitlerite and Communist propaganda in the last few years. There have been times when one might have thought that France was going either Fascist or Communist, and one side of the fence accused the other of being the victim of outside propaganda and being paid by Moscow, Berlin or Rome. But it was usually recognized that foreign propaganda, of whatever origin, could hardly succeed if France itself, or fairly powerful sections of public opinion, were not predisposed to it. It was deprecated and sometimes prosecuted when it became too obviously dangerous, but I do not think that anybody in France seriously thought that the French could turn Communist or Fascist under the mere pressure of foreign propaganda.

And yet France is permanently much more exposed to a change of régime and to revolution than is America. The principles of freedom and democracy on which the Republic is founded are firmly established, but there are numerous minorities—ranging from the Royalists and the Bonapartists to the Communists—who are openly advocating an overthrow of the government. No law prevents them from expressing their revolutionary program, and a Frenchman may be a Communist or a Monarchist without being considered less French for that reason—at least in normal times.



In the United States, however, there are no organized parties that recommend any important change in the government. In fact, no other country in the world, not excluding England, believes so firmly and so unanimously that it possesses the most perfect form of government, not only for the present but for an everlasting future. In the eight years that I have lived here, I have heard this Administration criticized as well as its predecessors, but I do not believe that I have ever heard an American recommend that the Constitution be scrapped and another form of government be adopted. In fact, the confidence of Americans in the excellence of their institutions and in the principles on which they are founded amounts to an act of faith. This faith, indeed, makes an American what he is. It is the most fundamental guarantee of the unity of the nation.

And yet in no country in the world (except in the totalitarian States) is there anything comparable to the Dies Committee, the function of which is to uncover and eradicate if possible everything which, in the minds of its members, goes under the head of un-American activities. It is in a mild form—a very mild form—a sort of *Comité de Salut Public* such as existed during the French Revolution, the object of which was to send to the guillotine all those who were suspected of carrying on subversive activities or of entertaining unorthodox thinking.

And the Dies Committee is not the only manifestation of this extraordinary reaction to the evils of propaganda.

## VI

It would be interesting indeed to try to retrace the history of this American consciousness of the evils of propaganda. One would find, I think, that it is not older than the conception of isolationism as we know it today. And that means that you could trace it back not to George Washington, but possibly to the beginning of this century; that is, to the time when the United States really became a world power and found itself facing the dilemma of sharing the universal responsibilities which its new greatness entailed, or of trying to avoid them as long as possible.

In other words, it would seem that the propaganda-phobia is a defense mechanism consciously or unconsciously devised to support American aloofness and directed indiscriminately against innovation or influence blowing from across the Atlantic.

Because the interesting fact about the fear of propaganda is the criterion on which it is based. According to the Dies Committee and innumerable other expressions of the same tendency, the monster to be destroyed is a hydra with countless heads whose purpose is to introduce in America un-American ideas. Now, when one tries to find out what is properly un-American one finds that it covers practically every political innovation emanating from Europe. They are known under the general deprecatory name of "isms" and treated as if they were some sort of destructive and insidious germ, the malignancy

of which gives them some sort of physical reality like that of bacteria.

And this brings us back to the chronic misconception of one another which separates the Old World from the New much more effectively than the Atlantic Ocean. We face indeed a very strange paradox, the analysis and consequences of which deserve a good deal more study than they have received either in Europe or here.

This paradox is based on an illusion which can be formulated briefly as follows: Americans, when they think of Europe or any part of it, conjure up the image of something decrepit, decadent or unprogressive. To many, Europe appears doomed and the prospect of war has added to the conviction that civilization will perish there and can survive only in America. They consider all the revolutionary movements of Europe not as a sign of vitality but as proofs that the Old World is in the last throes of agony. America, on the other hand, appears to its optimistic inhabitants as younger, braver, more audacious, and with a much brighter future.

For a long time Europe shared this conception of America—especially up to the Depression. It looked, indeed, up to 1929, as if the Americans had found the secret of eternally increasing prosperity, and although the spiritual and political contribution of the United States always appeared somewhat slim, it was thought that its extraordinary progress in the field of well-being and social betterment for all was an adequate compensation. The Depression changed all that. Europe awoke with a

jerk to the realization that the American system did not work perfectly, that it might be a fallacy, and that it was dangerous.

Simultaneously two revolutionary movements, Communism and Fascism, began to proclaim that the ideas of the Western World were outworn, that democracy, liberalism and the principles of capitalistic bourgeois society had ceased to correspond to the requirements of modern nations and modern men. With terrific energy and ruthlessness they attacked all the ideas and all the habits of thought on which the civilized world had been living for 150 years. In so doing they attacked not only England and France and the other "democratic" nations of Europe, but they attacked America. Or, to put it another way, it appeared that America, instead of occupying a vanguard position in the march of progress, suddenly found herself treated as the most reactionary country in the world—as the greatest obstacle to the triumph of the European revolutions.

All the achievements of America were suddenly reduced to much smaller proportions in the estimation of these new revolutionary pioneers. German, Italian and Russian propaganda harped untiringly on the failures of the American system, jeered at its old-fashioned attachment to outworn principles, emphasized the insoluble misery of unemployment, etc. On the other hand, these same nations boasted of their own achievements, and of the prodigious results that can be attained once the costly illusion of individual freedom is sacrificed to the good of the totalitarian state.

The other European countries—the democracies—did not succumb to the new doctrines, but there is no doubt that some phases of their methods were adopted by the whole of Europe. It could not be otherwise. It was self-defense. One hundred and fifty years ago, and in the same way, the explosive force of the French Revolution was felt all over the world; and although the whole of Europe went to war to stop the revolutionary armies of France, the final result was the adoption—in a very modified form and with a great deal of extraneous addition—of the principles of 1789.

## VII

It may be that the Communist-Fascist-Nazi revolutionary combine which has been upsetting the whole universe since the end of the last war will be destroyed by the next one, and that liberalism and the principle of individual freedom will be restored. I hope so, because, after all, there is no use fighting if this result is not obtained. But there is no doubt that Europe, such as it will exist then, will not be the same as the one we now know, and much less like the one we knew before 1914. The great revolutionary movement of the twentieth century—which is as important as, and in a sense a reaction to, the French and American Revolutions of the eighteenth—will have made an even deeper mark on the ways of thinking and living of European society.

I do not mean that England and France, especially if they are victorious in war, will have become Fascist (as

Mussolini predicted) or Communist. But a certain blending of totalitarian methods and individualistic philosophy will result. What aspect, both political and social, this blending will take, what will be its expressions, is impossible to tell. The nineteenth century saw the triumph of bourgeois civilization, with its crowning achievement in the Victorian era. This civilization is nevertheless supposed to trace its origins to the French Revolution, the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and the American Bill of Rights. The consequences of revolutions are not necessarily in line with what the revolutionaries set about to accomplish.

The question is whether, after the present crisis is past, the relation of America to Europe will remain the same. Will the feeling of diffidence toward Europe—this new and unpredictable Europe—persist, and will therefore the gap between the two worlds remain as deep? Will the European correspondent of the future be troubled by the same curious feeling of inadequacy and hopelessness in his attempts to explain to the Old World—which may then seem terribly new—the New World, which will look strangely old?

I do not know; but let me hazard as a conclusion that whatever the course of events in Europe, the part played by America will be far beyond anything which can be envisaged now. The participation of the United States in the war of 1914-1918 and in the Peace Conference that followed was a first attempt, a sort of experiment on the part of the Americans to contribute to the solution of world problems. It failed—or at least it seemed to fail—

especially in the eyes of the Americans who now firmly believe that their entry into that war was a terrible mistake because it did not make the world "safe for democracy." History, nevertheless, may judge that this first act was not so much of a failure as is now thought. Europe, and possibly North America, would already be subject to the tyranny of Germany's fanatic will of world domination if that war had been lost. But few Americans are prepared to accept this view. To consider 1917 as a terrible error is part of the rationalization mechanism which supports the modern American idea of saving itself from Europe.

Still, I do not share the belief of three Americans out of four (according to recent polls) that this nation will inevitably be drawn into the second episode of the twentieth-century revolutionary war of Europe. I cannot see why it should be drawn in, if it does not want to be, in spite of all the propaganda in the world. But I do believe that this nation's participation in the shaping of the new world which is already in process will be felt increasingly and independently of whether America takes a direct part in any war waged to stop the combined attack of Hitlerism and Stalinism against the conservative democracies.

Exactly what part the United States will play in this extraordinary effort of mankind to find new readjustments, cannot be foretold. But I believe that it will emerge as the most conservative force of the future. Indeed, it is exerting that influence already, and its passionate effort to assert itself as invulnerable to the "isms" of Europe, its resistance to foreign propaganda of all

kinds, its fears that civilization will perish everywhere, and that the American mission is to save it in America at least—all these are mere symptoms which indicate the part that America will play in the evolution of the civilized world.

One often hears Americans say that this country is threatened with a Communist revolution or a Fascist coup d'état. Nothing is more improbable. What actually threatens this country is too much impermeability to the influx of new ideas. American conservatism is like a sea anchor attached to a world tossed and threatened by all the gales of revolution and war—a strange fate for the descendants of the Revolution and of the pioneers. This conservatism can be good for the future of the whole world. It can be dangerous, both for the outside world and for America itself, if it merely serves to widen the gap between the people of Europe and those of this country.



III

MME. MIRA GAVRILOVITCH

*Yugoslavia*

“You American Women”

MIRA GAVRILOVITCH, born in Yugoslavia, studied philosophy in Vienna and law in Zagreb. First ~~and only~~ woman in her country to receive degree of doctor of laws, also first woman to become state attorney and judge (women have since been barred by law from holding these offices). One of the leaders of the Yugoslav feminist movement. At present in New York as the wife of the Yugoslav Consul and feature correspondent of the Belgrade *Vreme*.

### III

## YOU AMERICAN WOMEN

By *Mira Gavrilovitch*

#### I

THE first time I heard the word "America" I was only three years old. Our servant girl, Toni, once brought her little daughter to our house in the Croatian city of Osijek. I asked the child, whose name was Anna, about her father. "He is in America," was the answer. In amazement I inquired, "What is America?" "A distant, great big country," said Anna, raising her tiny arms high in the air and standing up on her toes to show me more graphically the size of America. Even at that early age I was very much like a gullible adult; what I didn't understand always made a great impression on me. Little Anna with her straggly hair and threadbare dress presented a sorry contrast to me with my silken ribbons and immaculate skirts. But in my eyes she was a splendid being from another world, for did she not have a father in America, the country whose name I heard for the first time?

My fancy dwelt on this strange conception, and I wanted to hear much about America. My parents told me of a far-away land which one could reach only after a long voyage. America became to me the symbol of

distance, and whenever anyone spoke to me of distances I always asked, "Is it as far as America?"

Toni was a simple peasant girl, who could neither read nor write. In this respect, however, she was no exception in her social group, for in many regions in our country there are illiterates, particularly among women. In some places as many as half of the women are illiterate. Toni did not communicate with her husband, and, in turn, received no word from him. I was childishly anxious to write to him for her, and this desire was the motivating spark of my early acquisition of reading and writing skills. But more than a year passed before Toni and I were able to construct with great toil the first letter. I wrote this first letter over and over again so many times that I shall never forget its contents. In the stereotyped style of our peasants, the letter read: "Praised be Jesus Christ, I pray that this letter will find thee in such good health as I find myself at present. Your faithful Toni." When I wrote this letter I was still too innocent to know that the word "faithful" was not the most appropriate to apply to Toni. Little Anna was four years old, and Toni's husband had been in America ten years.

Only long afterward did I become aware of the many tragedies endured by our immigrants to other lands and their families. Our peasants marry young, and during the time when immigration to America was relatively unrestricted, many of the youthful husbands left their brides behind and set forth to America to seek their fortunes. Often nothing was heard of them for many years. Too often, when they finally did return they found their

wives living with other men, or were welcomed home by children who were not their own. You Americans who have gained so much from those foreigners, and from the endless hopes and ambitions they brought to your shores, are not adequately cognizant of the sacrifices that ensued in their Old World homes.

But let us return for a moment to my childhood and Toni. For nearly two years we wrote the same letter regularly every month, until the writing became virtually automatic. We waited, both of us, with longing for an answer, but for a long time none came. One day the great moment arrived; a letter from America! Toni's husband was laconic. He sent a ticket, and asked Toni to come to him—and she went. Little Anna naturally was left behind with her grandparents, and to the best of my knowledge Toni's husband never learned of the child's existence.

When Toni said good-bye to me, I cried bitterly. These were not tears of parting, but tears of envy. To think that Toni, the plain servant girl, could go to the far-away fairyland while I had to remain at home! I gave her my most treasured doll, which I had christened "America," to take along, so that I might at least see that land vicariously. After Toni left, I asked every day whether she was already there. I don't know how long it was before I was told that she had arrived, but to my young mind it seemed an eternity. America, that land so hard to reach, seemed to me even more of a wonderland. Several months after Toni's departure, when I had almost forgotten her, a card arrived. In a borrowed hand

it bore the legend: "Praised be Jesus Christ, I pray that this card will find thee in such good health as I find myself at present. Your faithful Toni."

I never again heard from Toni, and even today it's a puzzle to me how this simple peasant woman, who could not read, write or speak a foreign tongue, and who previously had not even been on a train, how she could take such a big journey all by herself. For many years her card was preserved among my belongings as the symbol of a distant, strange world.

Childhood memories and impressions leave their imprint for a lifetime. Thus America remained for me the land of my dreams and longing. With deep emotion I drank in the tales of the Wild West and of the conquest of America; cried bitter tears over the miserable fate of the slaves, and worshiped their emancipator, Abraham Lincoln. At that time America was for me a land full of romance where the most wonderful experiences were common currency. I wanted to go there disguised as a young lad, but the only suit of clothes I could borrow was far too large for me.

Later, when I grew older, the idea of America which I had built up in my childish imagination faded considerably. The new picture which I now painted of the United States was deeply colored with hues borrowed uncritically from my environment and from external influences. I adopted the viewpoints common to the Continental European.

We Europeans get our idea of America from you Americans whom we see in Europe, from things we read

and hear about your continent, and particularly from what we see in the American motion pictures. We have an idea, for instance, that all of you are fabulously rich; for you are able to live in the most elegant hotels, spend your money generously, and, unlike the Czechs, you don't save the sugar that's left from your coffee. American, indeed, is our synonym for rich. It is our belief that in America some remarkable power transforms the human hand into a magnet which need only reach out to attract the dollars. In our opinion you Americans are skilful only in earning money, and we do not put much stock in your scientific or artistic abilities. Whenever we see you admiring antiquities in Italy, or casually inspecting old chateaus and picture galleries in France, we are firmly convinced that you understand pitifully little about all these things, and that you can easily be taken in. We seem to forget that on your travels you are seeking that which you have no chance to look for at home.

After being subjected to innumerable American films loaded with shooting and knockout scenes, we come to look upon you as extravagant sensationalists. But it must be admitted that we cater to your inclinations. The dangerous *Apache* hangouts in Paris put on exciting scenes purely for your benefit. Enterprising Europeans construct complete Potemkin villages in your behalf.

There is, however, a much more complimentary aspect to our idea of what is American. For example, we term "American" anything that makes an impression on us because of its incredible size. When one tries to give a European a genuine account of something in America,

it is always necessary to exaggerate in order to avoid disappointing the listener. When on my last visit to my native town (where a five-story house is ordinarily classified in the high category) I told them that I lived on the eleventh floor in New York, everyone's enthusiasm was sharply deflated. My listener's spirits rose as I gradually added over forty stories to the distant apartment house.

## II

It seemed that my yearning to go to America would never be realized. Yet, just as Toni one day received her husband's request to come to him there, so my great day also was destined to arrive. My husband was transferred to New York, and my longstanding dreams were now at last to become a reality. On the deck of the *Aquitania* I watched Europe slowly vanish from my horizon. The foaming waves which beat against our ship kept time to the throb of my happily excited heart. I looked into the distance and proposed to remove the colored glasses which had hitherto distorted my view of America. I wanted to let it impress me without prejudice and without extraneous influences of any kind. Just as a mountain climber who reaches a peak for the first time, lets the unfamiliar panorama on the summit spontaneously take hold of him, thus did I want to experience America. I undertook to discover it for myself more than four hundred years after Columbus.

The first view I had of the United States was out of my cabin window, when I saw some small, idyllic houses.



The first American to whom I spoke on American soil was the immigration officer, who, to be sure, had not adopted the American tempo. Thus I saw, immediately on my arrival, how important it had been for me to resolve to leave behind in Europe my European concept of America.

The very first day in my hotel, I was again reminded of Toni. Our waitress was a girl named Mildred. She was a pretty lass, free and straightforward in her approach, intelligent and genuinely American in her manners. Her parents were from my country, having immigrated before she was born. They were both illiterate and earned their living here by heavy, unskilled labor. Mildred, however, was a real American. I observed her for some time but could detect in her none of the well-known characteristics of our peasants. Even the physical type was different. It was not until much later, when I had an opportunity to get acquainted with many Americans who are the offspring of the most diverse peoples of the world, that I was able to draw any conclusions from this. I was astonished at the way in which the environment can alter both character and characteristics, and at the manner in which people transplanted to another world can become changed persons.

I wondered how it could be that you Americans, belonging to so many different races, nationalities and religions, can feel like a united people. I believe that I have now found the answer to this question: the pride of belonging to this great unity of states makes you a strong nation, and virtually crystallizes a whole continent into

a single state. Just as King Hakon in Ibsen's "The Pretenders" became king because he possessed the royal thought, so you have become Americans because you have acquired the thought of an American state. I greatly admire you for this.

In Europe I smiled a little at your "democracy" when I read that Josephine Baker during her last visit to New York could get no living accommodations. In the city she was not welcome because she was a Negress, and in Harlem she was outlawed as a traitor. During the first days of my stay in this country my cynicism was displaced by intense admiration for your democracy. It was wonderful to hear you talk freely and openly about any topic under the sun. When on one occasion, at a social gathering where your President was openly criticized, I was asked for an opinion, I answered, "I am astonished that you are able to speak in this way about the head of your state. I know no land in Europe where this would be permitted." Some time later, I chanced to see Mrs. Roosevelt standing in line at an airport awaiting her turn like anyone else, to buy a ticket. I took a deep breath—I wanted to drink in as much as possible of this atmosphere of freedom and equality. I was not less impressed when at a celebration I heard your chief of state announced simply as President of the United States, without any other designation or title. Whenever I marveled at the courtesy of policemen on the street, I was constantly reminded of the words of my professor of political science, who used to tell us in his lectures: "That

state is democratic in which every public servant is subordinate to the citizens and does not feel superior to them."

It took quite a while before I saw some of the less favorable aspects of your democracy. Even here, alas, political freedom does not seem to guarantee an ideal type of equality. I found class distinctions here which I did not expect to find. I knew that rich people here were very much richer than my wealthy countrymen, but it was completely new to me that the American plutocracy surrounded itself with a Chinese Wall. I find also that the term "society" is far better suited to the aristocratic circles of England than to those in democratic America. Even in the use of your national handshake greeting, you seem to make social distinctions, and don't offer your hand to anyone but your peers. Perhaps, however, my impression is not very valid, because many of these customs, after all, are strange to me.

Our first American cocktail party was an initiation into a new world of manners. My husband and I were considerably taken aback by the jack-in-the-box movements the men made whenever one of the women desired to rise from her place. When she returned, the gymnastics began again. It was a lucky thing that I sat near my husband and could always signal him under foot to go through the same motions. Otherwise, he would surely not have interrupted his conversation and set aside his cocktail so often in order to show womankind this unwonted gallantry.

The just-mentioned American gallantry would not surprise me so much, if it were not for the fact that the men display a totally different code in buses and subways. Another custom which strikes me in similar fashion is the male habit of removing the hat in the presence of a woman in an apartment-house or hotel elevator and the atrophy of this habit in business buildings. I wonder whether in these seemingly trivial instances a sort of class consciousness is not at work? Can it be that subconsciously the American man is willing to make these concessions only to women whom he regards as social equals? On closer thought, however, this may be merely a "New Yorkism." But I wonder about class consciousness whenever I see how exclusive various clubs are; how entire residential sections are restricted to a single social class; and how much more a good address does to make the man than do his spiritual qualities. I am often reminded now of Upton Sinclair's books in which he "takes American society for a ride." When I originally read these books, they were only entertaining novels, but today they assume much more realistic significance for me. The American of my long-distance hero worship, when seen at close quarters, has acquired normal human weaknesses.

The inconsistencies of American social customs are very striking to the foreigner. On the one hand, when royal visitors come, you do not hesitate to serve them the vulgar and messy "hot dog"—to be eaten with the fingers! It is difficult to reconcile with such things your fastidiousness in many relatively insignificant points of etiquette.

## III

As a leader of the feminist movement in my own country I have naturally been very much concerned with the position of women in the United States. In most European countries, we women are still fighting not only for recognition of political rights, but also for equality in social and professional life. Even the civil law in certain parts of my native land draws a distinction between the sexes, and women are actually not allowed to perform certain functions for which they are better suited than men. Thus, for example, they cannot assume guardianship of foster children, nor act as witness to the signing of a will. A married woman must have her husband's consent before she can undertake any enterprise of importance. "The man is the head of the family," so our law prescribes.

Our husbands are far less considerate than yours. They like to have us cater to them as if they were Turkish Pashas. They would never think of lending a hand in the house. I was amazed when I first saw American men helping their wives wash dishes, without the least embarrassment.

So, your country impresses me as a paradise for women. Things for which we women in most European states are still struggling, have already become realities here.

Woman's influence here is tremendous in every way. I believe one reason for this is that you American women have realized in time the strength there is in union. Nowhere in Europe can one find such a variety and multi-

tude of women's organizations as there are here. A second, perhaps more important reason for your influence is that you have accumulated two-thirds of the nation's wealth.

The American housewife has at her command all sorts of work-saving devices, which we either do not yet know about, or which we still look upon as luxuries. One might say that American housekeeping is concentrated in a can. In my country we have to cook on old-fashioned wood stoves; only a well-to-do woman can afford a vacuum-cleaner; and only a few wealthy homes can boast of having an electric refrigerator. In summer our housewives stand for hours by the hot stove preparing winter preserves, fruits, jellies, vegetables, pickles and peppers. Canned goods are seldom used in a private household. In Yugoslavia love is very much dependent on a good kitchen. If cafeterias like those in America were to supplant the kitchens, I am afraid our bachelor problem would become severe. Our women are very much tied down to the house because the men and the children come home at noon for several hours. Inasmuch as rents are very low, we have big houses and a lot of furniture, so that keeping house is a full-time task for a woman.

There is, however, one respect in which we have an advantage over you American women. That is in the fact that the servant problem is not half so difficult as it is here. Nearly every middle-class woman can afford to have one or more servants, for we pay very little for them. Thus, for instance, a first-rate maid, who can cook well and do every other kind of housework, can be had

for what must seem to you the ridiculous wage of ten dollars a month. An ordinary household helper does not cost more than five dollars a month.

American women worship at the shrine of youth and beauty. Old American women are truly rare—at least, if one is to judge from appearances. Whole new branches of industry have grown up out of their efforts to cultivate youthfulness. Thus, through their search for youth and beauty they have become an important economic factor. It would be superfluous to present boring statistics to prove this point. A stroll through the shopping center of almost any American city, and a cursory glance through the newspapers and magazines, would suffice to show this. The shops for women clearly outnumber the men's stores, and most of the advertisements in the newspapers are devoted to articles of feminine interest. The poor American men!

It is precisely in the world of women's fashions that the principles of successful American business management are seen at their best: it is much less important to have fine, seasonable goods, than to advertise wisely and to set up a truly novel window display. We in Europe always say that good merchandise is its own best advertisement, but here the advertising often outdoes the quality of the goods. Very frequently in New York City I stand in front of the Fifth Avenue windows, and admire more the way the things are displayed than the things themselves. Who in Europe, for instance, would get the idea of displaying in an elegant shop a mannequin whose head is replaced by a stick tilted at a coquettish angle and

crowned with the latest hat? If I were a man, I would make some sarcastic remark about this wooden substitute for a woman's head.

As far as fashion is concerned, you American women are far more fortunate than we in Europe. You wear whatever is becoming to you and are not subject to the European type of fashion dictatorship. Cheap ready-made clothes make it possible for every one of you to go well dressed. You place more value on the style than on the quality. The great range of prices in your articles of fashion is also genuinely American. The price is not determined by the quality of the goods, but rather by the name of the shop where the things are bought. You can dress either at little or great cost, as you choose. The influence of the movies on American fashions is likewise very marked. Hollywood can afford to hire the very best of fashion designers, and the expensive creations for the great film stars are later—thanks to the miracle of mass production—made available to the multitudes.

American merchants are much keener psychologists than the European. The former are well aware of the human weakness for buying bargains, and they know how to capitalize on this. Special sales and auctions are far more commonplace here than in Europe. You American women, in purchasing for your private needs, are very often tantamount to wholesale buyers.

Even in your fashions, your philosophy of life is reflected. In winter your shops display summer things, and in summer there is an advance showing of winter things. This, I believe, is one more indication that you



live fast and think of the future, while we in Europe live more slowly and more definitely in the present.

In your personal life, particularly, I find the one characteristic which I look upon as genuinely American. You are all preoccupied with making money and increasing your possessions. For that reason everyone here works, regardless of the amount of wealth he has. Pressure, speed, and a continual forward drive seem to be the keynote of your life. The workingman has no time to occupy himself with art and science, and leaves these things to young students and women.

Since, however, the human spirit requires romance along with the more serious side of life, it seems that you are more subject to the appeal of the imaginative than we in Europe are. Your films are sentimental, and must always have a happy ending. This makes for the paradox that in capitalistic America, where everything is on a practical basis, your youth enters into marriage with a much more romantic viewpoint than does the European. The movies are a decisive influence in bringing this about. It is not until later that the true life plot is found to work out in a manner quite different from anything that your young people are prepared to meet. If your movies were to end with the difficulties which always arrive with marriage rather than with the evasion of these problems, I believe that divorce would not be quite the remarkable American phenomenon that it is.

You Americans want to experience romantic movies not only in the theater but also in real life, in order to gain some relief from the intensity of your work and

from the monotonous whirl of your machines. You are greedy for excitement, sensations, and record-making. Here, much more often than in Europe, great careers are built upon sheer chance, or upon a good idea. Success comes not only to the person who has the good fortune to do something unusual, but also to the one who experiences something extraordinary. It does not matter whether the incident is of a positive or negative nature; the main thing is that it must be something entirely unique and novel. The unfortunate young man who stood on a ledge high up on a tall New York building and threatened to leap to his death, would certainly have had a career if he had not carried out his threat.

Nowhere in the world are there so many devotees to the cult of championships as here. Your desire to make records, however, rests upon the foundations of your democracy and your economic setup. Napoleon's motto, "Free expression for every talent," has been realized by you. Since competition everywhere is so keen, your striving for records rests not only upon the human drive for superiority, but also upon the wish to attain something which may be of economic, social or political value. For similar reasons, your personal life is seemingly more devoted to publicity, and society news columns are also an American specialty.

In view of your general sociability, it is sometimes difficult for a European to comprehend certain aspects of your etiquette. I am reminded in this respect of the experience of a young lady friend of mine, who recently came from Europe. She complained bitterly to me about

your customs, which threatened to destroy her happiness. She came to New York for the express purpose of finding a rich husband here. Inasmuch as she is attractive and refined, she thought that she would not have much difficulty in carrying out her plan. How disappointed she was when after weeks of attending dances and frequenting restaurants and lobbies of big hotels, she was not approached nor spoken to even once by an American man. Only foreigners addressed her, and for that she certainly did not need to come to New York. This little story shows the difference between our outlooks. That which seems to you a personal affront may in the eyes of a European woman be something very desirable. We European women are, alas, more accustomed to being looked upon as females than as human beings with equal rights.

## IV

The American woman enters into marriage on terms of full-fledged equality with her mate. Moreover, she retains the control of her own possessions, and the institution of dowries is unknown here. Among us, however, it is customary for the husband to receive a dowry in order to lighten the burden of household expenses. In case the marriage gift is in the form of money, it becomes his property. If the dowry consists of real property, then the husband becomes the legal beneficiary, and has the right to do whatever he pleases with the income. With respect to the free possessions of the wife which are not turned over to the husband as a dowry, there is

in our law a presumption that the husband is the legal administrator; and his wife, in the event that she objects to this, must expressly refuse him this right. But if the wife manages her own possessions, her husband also has the legal right, as it is prescribed, "to hold in check any mismanagement on the part of the woman."

It is unnecessary for me to state how important it is for the position of the married woman that she should have her own possessions and control them herself. It gives her not only more self-confidence, but also more rights. In Europe it is not infrequent that the husband marries his wife's bank account; and if he had his choice, he would withdraw it from the bank and deposit his wife there in its stead.

There is a better side also to the dependent position of our married women. The mutuality of marital life is much more highly developed than it is here, and the wife does not yield so readily to divorce as does her American sister. Since the main theme of life for most of our women centers in husband and children, the supreme effort is made to satisfy and please the man, and a generous part of feminine individuality is sacrificed to this cause. Whenever it is necessary, however, for one of my countrywomen to help out financially, she cheerfully assumes whatever position or work will make it possible for her to promote the welfare of her family. The Yugoslav woman is more self-effacing than the American, and for that reason more easily able to make sacrifices.

The American woman in vocational life stands on an equal footing with men, and she has access to nearly all

occupations. In contrast, our women are legally excluded from certain judicial and governmental positions, and even in the professions that are open to us we can seldom attain a top-ranking position. Generally speaking, we are held down to our "natural" calling of housewife and mother, since, it is argued, we were created for this purpose and are lacking in the higher qualities necessary for responsible positions. The real reason is seldom admitted—that it is not our mental inferiority, but competition, the struggle for existence, which is really the issue. At a meeting where I spoke for the equal rights of the sexes, one of the lords of creation sarcastically countered that we women were left out by nature from the possibility of working side by side mentally with men—for do we not have a much smaller brain than man? I could have replied with the oft-quoted fact that Dante was able to create *The Divine Comedy* despite his abnormally small brain, but I merely asked: "Do you consider oxen wiser than men because they have much larger brains?" In truly male fashion, my antagonist murmured something to the effect that women were obviously not created to engage in serious discussions.

In connection with the independence of American women, I tried to interpret also the fact that many workingwomen here prefer to use the title "Miss," regardless of whether they are married or not. In many countries of Europe we are fighting to have all workingwomen addressed as "Mrs." I understand the psychological motivation for this latter desire. The married woman enjoys more prestige socially, and for this reason the unmarried

woman who works, wants to compensate for her subconscious inferiority complex. In your case, however, I had logically come to an opposite conclusion, but I find here a certain confusion which I cannot easily understand. I have been told that here, too, in a certain sense, the married woman has more prestige, and that the coming-out parties of your society debutantes are primarily a device for announcing the marriageability of a girl. Even your custom of taking over both your husband's Christian name and surname, seems to me inconsistent with your attitude of independence.

There is only one more point I should like to raise in this general connection, which pleases me about you American women. So far as I have been able to determine, you manage, with few exceptions, to retain your femininity at your work. I feel that this is an excellent thing, for equality, and not identity, with man should be woman's aim. Only when women bring with them into all their life-activities their feminine qualities, only then does their work have intrinsic value for society. Nature itself has decreed that new things can be created only through the joint efforts of both sexes. Thus, the social order can attain a full development only when the influence of both sexes works in harmony and is equally strong.

Furthermore, you American women enjoy political rights for which we still have to struggle. They tell us that we have not yet arrived at political maturity, and that we would always vote for our husband's or father's party; and if we did not do this, family conflicts would

arise. But, if we were to free ourselves from the influence of the men surrounding us, the argument continues, then we would, like immature youngsters, vote for the extreme parties. On one occasion I sought to meet these arguments with instances from history, and pointed out that the few queens who ruled were nearly all great and successful politicians. I was told in reply: "That's nothing remarkable. When women rule they always follow the advice of men, while men rulers are strongly influenced by women." What can one say to such an argument?

We European women, who are still fighting for equal rights, owe a debt of gratitude to you American women. You are a living proof that the arguments against equality do not hold much water. Nowhere in the world have so many gigantic things been created as in America. Whenever I stand in front of the Empire State Building and look up to the peak, I ask myself if this is not the symbol of America. The inevitable answer is that this is possible only because there is freedom among you for everyone, men and women, to develop to the full extent of your potentiality.

Your children are educated to become free, independent persons. Very often your schools are unfavorably compared with European standards of scholarship. It is true that when your children finish school they know much less Latin and Greek than our children, and they do not have such familiarity with abstract knowledge; but your children get to know much more about life itself. Graduates of your schools are mature people who

have outgrown childhood. Your children, precisely because they are subjected to less authority, acquire better habits of self-discipline.

I have mentioned here only a few of my impressions. If I wanted to recount all of them I should have to write a thick volume, for there are myriads of novelties here for the European. America is for us a different continent and another world. It is a land of technical progress, where things which we dream of for the future have already become a reality. Mechanization rides triumphant through this land like some legendary conqueror of old. It is extremely difficult to disentangle the fantastic from the real. On occasions when from the other side of the Hudson I view the crazy-quilt pattern of the metropolitan lights, my fantastic childhood conceptions of America seem to be reflected there. I close my eyes and yield to the influx of childhood memories. I seem to see Toni smiling at me with that blissful expression which heralded her departure to that "distant, great big country."



IV

ALBERTO CAPRILE, JR.

*Argentina*

“From the Argentine Angle”

ALBERTO CAPRILE, Jr., born in Buenos Aires, 1900, educated in the Argentine Capital. Studied one year in Columbia University School of Journalism, New York. Newspaper work on *La Nacion*, Buenos Aires; became New York correspondent of *La Nacion* in 1937.

## IV

### *FROM THE ARGENTINE ANGLE*

By *Alberto Caprile, Jr.*

#### I

**F**IRST of all, let me say that I am an interpretive correspondent rather than a reporter sending out straight news. Thus I am interested in tendencies and movements rather than in current happenings.

Second, I am an Argentine and a citizen of the South American country most like the United States, the one which stands out as an economic competitor of the United States and the one which feels that it does have and should have a share in the political leadership of the Western World. The fact that in Pan American conferences Argentina often seems to take a position of opposition to the United States, is not a proof of unfriendliness but of the fact that Argentina does not intend to play a subordinate role. If it is ever necessary for the Latin American viewpoint to be represented, as contrasted with the Anglo-Saxon point of view, Argentina is the obvious spokesman. In other words, Argentina may be the younger brother of United States, but it is an adult younger brother, not an infant. Once this is understood in the United States, relations between the two countries will be much smoother.

An Argentine, then, views the United States from a quite different perspective than that of the European observer. To the European the United States is still a young, undeveloped country with its future before it. To the sophisticated European the United States seems brash, adolescent, uncertain of itself and of its place in the world. America is still a land to which the European observer subconsciously feels that he, or his family, or his descendants, or his friends, may sometime go, as to a land of refuge or of opportunity. The European also feels that the United States is still in some respects a European colony. He is free to advise, as he would advise a growing child. But it has nothing to teach him, he thinks, as his own land has reached a more complete state of development and a higher level of culture. It is a land which may in the future attain to the cultural ripeness of his own. In other words, it is a land which in point of time is several generations behind him.

But to the Argentine, as I have said, the United States is an elder brother. Culturally, economically, politically, it is a step ahead of his own. Not necessarily qualitatively, for we naturally do not consider your fundamentally Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture in any way superior to our Latin Catholic culture. But we all know that it is different. In fact, to the extent that the Argentine really fails to understand the United States, he fails because he is a Latin, not because he is an Argentine.

For we feel that both historically and materially we have had a common experience. You think of yourselves as *sui generis*. However that may be, the Argentine Re-

public resembles you more closely than any other American state—in fact, more than any other country in the world. These two countries, being in America's temperate zones, were created by hard work, by the sweat of the brow—unlike Brazil and the Caribbean countries, where the sun ripens the bananas until they are ready to drop into the mouth of the indolent. Nature has given us little—except, of course, the broad, rich pampas; these, naturally, have had to be plowed and sown. But you had your fertile plains of the great central basin which, until recently, have needed little in the way of fertilization. To extend our agriculture, the people of both countries have been forced to take the hard way. We have both reclaimed deserts, built reclamation projects, cleared forests, built railroads and highways, fought insect pests, developed scientific agricultural methods, and forced them down the throats of our ruggedly individualistic farmers.

By certain accidents of history, climate and geography, your country, though settled originally somewhat later than ours, has gone faster in the process of the development and utilization of its resources and of building a politically independent structure on the ruins of colonial institutions. So we feel that we can profit by studying both your successes and your failures. Most Latin American constitutions are copied upon your Federal Constitution. We understand your Washington because we of southern South America have our Washington in San Martín and the northern South American countries their Washington in Bolívar. We acknowledge that we have no Lincoln, but as an Argentine I would commend to

you the study of the careers of those noble statesmen Sarmiento and Mitre of our post-civil-war era, who may well rank with any North American statesman of the post-Revolutionary decades, other than Lincoln.

As all students of our history know, it took us forty years instead of four to fight our civil war through to its conclusion in the permanent acceptance of a united nationality. We have had the same experience of achieving national union only at the cost of bloodshed.

## II

Turning to your economic situation, we do not look upon you, as Europe does, as a land of still undeveloped resources. We feel that you have passed quite through the frontier stage. No longer can you welcome new settlers. The stream of immigration has dried up. No longer will real estate values increase by leaps and bounds in response to new accretions of population. Your task is no longer that of providing homes for more people but of giving better homes and a higher standard of living to your present population. No longer can you go ahead blindly, trusting nature and nature's God to provide new sources of wealth to make up for the waste due to lack of foresight and intelligent planning. Your people do not realize the extent to which your economy has become static rather than dynamic. From now on you will watch your weight in fear of unhealthy obesity rather than in pride of healthy growth toward maturity.

In particular, the United States can no longer look

upon itself as a leading agricultural producer. You must give way ere long to the nations with still virgin soil, with richer lands and equally favorable climatic conditions. Take cotton, for instance: your South Atlantic states can no longer profitably produce cotton at the world market price. In fact, cotton production in those states is now a political and social matter rather than an economic one. Agricultural authorities agree that the flat plains of Texas, so well adapted to the use of machinery, compose the only region in the United States which can compete with the cotton lands of Brazil and the newly developed cotton producing region of the Argentine Chaco.

Before very long the United States must concentrate on its industrial production, restricting its agriculture to the task of supplying its by no means negligible domestic market. In other words, you will sell us automobiles, tractors, agricultural machinery, railroad equipment, which we will use to help us to supply the European countries that formerly purchased the products of your soil. And we will pay you with our profits from this trade which we will have taken away from you. This will mean greater development of your Detroit, Pittsburghs and Chicagos, and the world will hear less of your fertile prairies and great forests. Your once agricultural New England has already become a mere summer resort. Your farmers must to a large extent content themselves with subsistence farming. You will inevitably be compelled to adopt rigid and complicated crop controls. Probably your capital will increasingly be obliged to develop the

richer lands to the south, and a permanently large proportion of your profits from such exploitation and from your industrial prosperity will be devoted to something like a dole or a permanent public works program.

If you do not do this, the Southern countries will be compelled to industrialize themselves, even though such a process may be economically unsound, and you will lose your markets for manufactures as well as for other agricultural products.

Naturally your increasing industrialization brings problems in its wake—problems which we Argentines would like to avoid.

Argentina thinks it has a labor problem, but, compared with the United States, it simply doesn't know what a labor problem is. Mere reading of news dispatches from the United States in the Buenos Aires papers gives us no conception of the difficulties and complexities of the labor situation in the United States. In fact, an Argentine has no basis for comparison unless he happens to be a professional economist who has studied world labor conditions. We have our strikes, but they are mild affairs. The unions are largely confined to our two industrial cities, Buenos Aires and Rosario. We have no powerful national labor leaders like your William Green and John L. Lewis. The Argentines connected with the exhibits at your two World Fairs simply didn't know that such labor problems as you have existed until they found them on their hands in dealing with American workingmen. They feel that if there is any dictatorship in the United States it is the dictatorship of organized labor. Incidentally, they found



individual workingmen agreeable and accommodating enough, but all tied up by union rules.

As things look now, your labor unions will grow more powerful, more domineering and more politically conscious. Already the unions have the last word to say in the building industry, and they will soon be in the same dominant position in steel production and in the automobile industry. And even in what we might call the professions, among actors, newspapermen, you now have labor unions affiliated with the A. F. of L. or the C.I.O. Even if you do not have a labor dictatorship, or a dominant labor party—which is perhaps only being postponed by the rivalry between farmers and industrial workers—this increasing power of labor will mean eventually smaller profits for your capitalists, a decreasing incentive for investment, and a trend toward some form of corporate state.

Oppressed groups like those pictured in *The Grapes of Wrath*, like the Southern sharecroppers, are beginning to arouse the country to their plight, and to organize. You cannot ignore them any longer. Attempts at repression could even lead to bloodshed and intervention by the Federal government. What I am getting at is that these group clashes in the United States can no longer be glossed over or ignored. And there can be no settlement that does not involve disturbances of one kind or another. There will be a demand for a "strong hand," either to preserve "law and order" or to force the reforms demanded by the masses from the reluctant, stubborn, and powerfully entrenched "economic royalists."

And so, when it comes to your political future, I am rather inclined to be pessimistic. I fear you are about where Germany was in 1931, facing a choice between chaos and dictatorship. The spirit of competition is so inherent that you don't know how to cooperate. But with your country filled up, and with competition having reached the ruinous stage, you are either going to learn to cooperate or some strong man will make you. No nation can live forever on a *sauve qui peut* basis. It will be ruin or dictatorship—whether of the left or of the right. Only a strong hand can crush the political corruption which is rife in your cities, and which is only emphasized by sporadic prosecutions like the recent ones in New York, Waterbury, Kansas City, and Louisiana.

Your people are beginning to lose confidence in your future—a confidence which has always been the most striking note of your Americanism. Your people are becoming cynical about political virtue and take corruption for granted. The usual attitude is, "I'll get mine." How can you attain renewed national unity except by the drastic methods of dictatorship?

The delicate system of checks and balances in your Federal Court, and the ill-defined division of authority between the States and the Central Government, may have been adequate in the old days. But will they suffice in the coming years of economic upheaval the world over? Can they be preserved in a day when the "masses" insist on getting what they want through governmental action, and when the "classes" depend on the strong right arm of the government to guarantee them their "constitu-

tional rights"? Your own Thomas Jefferson once said that he despaired of democracy if great industrial and commercial cities should ever dominate the country—"When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, we shall become as corrupt as in Europe."

And yet, it may be that your democratic ideal and tradition—which has survived a civil war and an economic revolution—is so deeply rooted in the consciousness of the American people that you may be able to retain political democracy while adopting the economic controls called for by the changing times.

### III

Argentines and other Latin Americans are often asked what they think about the people of the United States. And you expect them to reply in terms of liking or disliking. As a matter of fact, they do not go around liking or disliking the Yankees; they simply do not trouble their heads about them. When they do think about them they are apt to conclude that they are rather shallow and superficial. The Argentine is inclined to think of the North American as a hard, cold-blooded calculating realist moved entirely by self-interest rather than by feeling. But here he is wrong. When a Latin American becomes acquainted with the United States he learns that the people really are in fact swayed by emotions and ideals. Perhaps it is the Argentine who is practical rather than the North American.

Take, for instance, the matter of religion. A dis-

tinguished Argentine who recently visited the United States was greatly surprised to find that the majority of Americans go to church and are more or less devout followers of their various creeds, of which, incidentally, they seem to have an unnecessarily large number. The American is likely to think of heaven as something he must earn during his mundane existence by a certain amount of self-denial, unselfishness, and abstinence. By giving up pleasure in this life he can insure it in the next. The Argentine, on the other hand, is likely to feel that all the fun he is ever going to have will be in this life, and that heaven, while a desirable destination, may be a rather dull place. So his game is to experience all the pleasures this earth affords. He merely plays safe by observing those minimum requirements absolutely necessary to insure his entrance into the respectable heavenly hereafter.

The United States interests an Argentine observer like myself, not as an isolated factor in the world mechanism, but as American developments are related to the whole world. The North American thinks of his country as isolated, but as a matter of fact it is not. He thinks he can compel isolation or participation—or non-participation—in war when he is really the helpless instrument of world forces.

The North American scene seems lacking in the dramatic as compared with the events, incidents and personages on the European stage. Americans do not realize what a poor show they offer. Roosevelt is the first United States President whose personality and acts have had that dramatic element which makes the Latins sit up and take

notice. There was, indeed, some little interest in Woodrow Wilson. But the succeeding Republican Presidents were quite negative. Incidentally, Argentine interest in Woodrow Wilson was largely due to the Allied, particularly the French, propaganda in South America. Roosevelt has been the beneficiary of this. Perhaps for the reason just stated, as we South Americans see it, the American Democratic party and Democratic party leaders seem to furnish the show, while the Republicans furnish the intermissions during which the audience walks out.

## IV

In trying to present the Argentine point of view about the United States, I desire to go beyond my own necessarily limited observations. Argentines visiting the United States often drop in at my office and we exchange views. I have read, or have been told of, other comments of observant fellow countrymen of mine. And so I am going to set down briefly some of these ideas which I find most pertinent—though I may not necessarily agree with them.

North Americans are tired of hearing us say that they have no soul. What do we mean by that? they ask us. One Argentine friend fears that it may boil down just to this, that you are not so weak in front of the women as we are. You trust your women alone with men to an extent that we do not. This freedom given to women is a matter for surprise to every Argentine visitor. Often he concludes that the American movie, which he has assumed to be a ridiculous exaggeration of American social free-

doms, is not so unrepresentative, after all. But are the people of the United States less romantic? Certainly not! Are you more virtuous? I doubt it. Perhaps you are merely, through racial inheritance, colder by temperament. I have heard of Argentine women who visited the United States, and, missing here the obvious appreciative glances of the woman-conscious Latin male, began to wonder whether they had lost their looks or their charm.

An Argentine, living in the great cosmopolitan city of Buenos Aires, finds that life in New York is just about the same as at home. But the man from a provincial city in Argentina—or in any other South American country, for that matter—finds a real difference. All your small cities and towns are simply little New Yorks; not only are they completely standardized, as related to each other, but they all strive to imitate the big cities. In Argentina, there is one Buenos Aires, and while the little provincial towns along the railroad are as alike as peas in a pod, they retain a definitely rural character—or, I might say, a small-town character—with their one- and two-story houses stretching in long vistas, with their plazas adorned by orange trees and the statue of some national hero, with the spire of the village church, and the old cabs with their tired horses at the curbs. In all these towns, there is a definitely lower living standard than in the capital. Your towns and cities are likely to have the same price levels and the same, standardized ready-made clothing and other necessities in the stores.

In so many respects Argentina—and other South American countries—is like the United States as compared with

Europe. You have a certain standardization of dress and of personal appearance, as far as women are concerned. It seems to us that your women all look alike, and my North American friends who have been in Argentina tell me that they recognize a distinct Argentine feminine type. There is the same impression of a standardized countenance when one picks up a rotogravure page of a New York newspaper with photographs of the season's debutantes, and the corresponding page of a Buenos Aires paper with the pictures of the current crop of brides. We Americans—of North and of South—talk about being individualistic, but we run to standardization. When there is a change of fashions everybody changes at once. A new shape of hat, or a new, fashionable shade in gowns is adopted as universally in Buenos Aires as in New York.

Argentines have no fault to find with American food, except to protest against the high prices—especially of meat. Argentine women visiting this country delight in the quality and variety of your salads. On the whole, we find food more expensive here and other necessities as cheap or cheaper. One Argentine who has traveled widely thinks American food is very German.

A distinguished and thoughtful Argentine engineer who has studied the United States closely, observes that the North American has the kind of mind which imagines that all economic problems can be solved by technical means. However that may be, he reported to his fellow engineers in Buenos Aires, the North Americans have begun a new era in the history of the world which would seem to take rank with that of the Egyptian pyramid

builders and those of the Inca and Maya builders of almost superhuman monuments. In building your Radio Cities, your Boulder and Grand Coulee dams, you seem to be making a dedication—as did those ancient builders—to a divinity. In this case technology is enthroned as a new god. If you give electricity to the most isolated farmer, it is in order to do away with manual labor. The North American seems to this observant Argentine engineer to have a special horror of dirty work. This is the reason why chauffeurs, furnace workers, plumbers, gardeners and the like always wear gloves. It is obvious that a man who needs his hands for delicate work—a draughtsman, an artist, a watchmaker—has to take every possible care not to damage his fingers; but that every man should present himself to the public with polished finger nails is certainly an exaggeration of refinement. Rather singular is the lack of logic on the part of those who lament the waste of natural energies and yet who want to abolish the most noble of all natural energies, the work of the human hand.

## v

An Argentine lawyer, not long ago, talking with a group of Argentine and North American friends, was asked about his impressions after some months of travel and residence in "the States." While his views do not entirely coincide with mine, they are sufficiently typical of the Argentine angle toward things North American



to be set down here as the concluding paragraphs of this discussion. He said in substance:

"The one thing that has impressed me most about your country—probably because I am a lawyer—is organized crime. Of course, there are plenty of criminals in Argentina, even small gangs of vicious cut-throats and kidnapers, and they are learning to use the automobile, as do your gangsters. But there is no such thing as a super-organization of criminals. Crime here is organized like business, with your Capones and Lucianos aping your Du Ponts and Rockefellers. There may be many reasons for this. One is the fact that everything here is on a large scale and that the rewards of organized crime put it in the big profits class. Another is that your police and your other crime-fighting agencies are so efficient that the criminal must fight organization with organization if he is to succeed.

"In actual court proceedings the chief difference I find is in the fact that your testimony is given orally and ours in writing. Also your trials are held with less privacy. This may be a good thing, from the standpoint of democracy, but it does degenerate into making a perfect circus of a sensational case. And your newspapers add to this by the enormous amount of publicity they give to crime and criminals. And I might add that your newspapers in general overdo personal publicity.

"Running through everything you do is the democratic tradition which manifests itself in such diverse ways. For instance, I was shocked when I called to pay my respects

to one of the most distinguished members of your Federal Supreme Court and he sat with his feet on his desk throughout the interview.

"On the other hand, there are your friendly policemen. I like the way they allow the children in your tenement districts on hot summer days to be cooled off in the streets under the street-cleaner's hose. I was charmed by the friendship between the street urchin and the policeman on the beat. The boys play their games freely and fearlessly in the presence of the policeman who merely keeps a benevolent eye on them to see that they keep out of serious mischief. In Argentina the boys in the street live in terror of the policeman and run when they see one coming two or three blocks away. Your way seems fundamentally democratic. And your traffic police are courteous and helpful.

"Naturally I am interested in your political system. It seems to me that the members of your Congress stay in office too long, sometimes for thirty years at a stretch. The system would be much more representative if new blood were constantly brought into your legislative assemblies and more young men could look forward to holding down a congressional or state legislative post. And it seems that there is something about your party system which hinders the development of leadership. In the Democratic party, Roosevelt overshadows everybody else, and the most likely choice of the Republican party for the next presidential race is the young and inexperienced Mr. Dewey.

"One constitutional point interests me. The United

States Constitution guarantees to the states a republican form of government, but your Federal government has never taken advantage of this to interfere—except perhaps during the abnormal period of ‘Reconstruction’ in the Southern states after the Civil War. But the Federal government of Argentina has made frequent use of its corresponding right of ‘intervention’ in order to insure proper elections or to suppress disorder in the provinces. Undoubtedly this has gone too far, though it has often been absolutely necessary, and it can easily be made—and has been made—a mere political weapon in the hands of the President. And yet there are cases in which this practice would be very useful in the United States. If you had the Argentine practice, the President of the United States would certainly have ‘intervened’ in Huey Long’s Louisiana, probably in Hague’s New Jersey, and possibly in the Kansas City, Philadelphia and Waterbury scandals.

“In general, while our constitutions are similar, in practice your individual states have more power than our provinces. But this is largely because your states are richer. Even our stronger provinces need and expect material help from the central government. Naturally, this financial and economic dependence tends to weaken political independence.

“Your system of constitutional checks and balances is still working, whatever your Republicans may say about the ‘Dictator’ in the White House. Your President Roosevelt has more power than our President Ortiz. But on the other hand he can be more easily checked or de-

feated in carrying out his program. That is because, as compared with ours, your opposition forces are more powerful and more insistent on their constitutional prerogatives. Your Congress has stronger leadership than ours, and the Supreme Court plays a much more important role. President Ortiz, I feel sure, would have succeeded where President Roosevelt failed in his attempt to make over the Supreme Court.

"It may surprise you to be told that you are more religious than the Argentines. Our big newspapers never publish sermons and church programs as yours do. And I think that your clergy interfere more with liberty of thought than do ours, in what is practically a 100 per cent Catholic country. Our priests preach the Bible doctrine of creation. But they do not interfere with educators who teach Darwinism. Anything like your Scopes case would be impossible with us.

"Passing from religion to morality, you Americans are both better and worse than are we. Let us put up a scale of morality from one to ten, one being good and ten being bad. You Americans would range from one to ten. But the Argentines would begin at about three in the scale and stop at seven. You have a class of self-sacrificing good neighbors, good citizens, almost saints, who devote not only their fortunes but their whole lives to doing good, to helping good causes not only in their own communities but all over the world. This class is hardly represented with us. On the other hand, the United States has a larger class not only of criminals but of the callous

and the greedy, chiselers, shysters, people without conscience, shame or decency. In other words, you run more to the extreme at both ends.

"It seems to me that you Americans are more light-hearted than we are. You are more given to bright-colored clothes. You do not have to wait for an annual carnival to let loose and enjoy life. There is something more simple in your attitude toward personal and public problems. You are not always worrying. Sometimes I think that grown-up Americans are like the children in Argentina.

"Your society is more fluid than ours. The Argentine girl practically never marries out of her own social class. Your high society is more democratic than ours. Incidentally, French authorities credit Argentine social life with being the most correct in the world. There is more opportunity for the American working girl or boy to get ahead. When an American workingman takes off his overalls and puts on his clothes in the evening, he feels that he is as much a gentleman as anybody. But the Argentine workingman is a workingman twenty-four hours a day.

"The Argentine has a strange feeling when he thinks about the United States. He has his Latin culture and his Latin traditions, so different from yours, and yet a study of historical and economic forces tells him that his country is where yours was a generation or so ago, and that his progress will be like yours. We are consciously or unconsciously copying you, and all this is bound to affect

our manners. We look to the United States both as a guide and as a warning. We hope to imitate your successes; we hope to avoid some of your failures.

“There is a strange contradiction inherent in all this. Perhaps it could be summed up in these words: Spain is our past; the United States is our future.”

V

BERNARD PERSON

*Holland*

“A Dutchman Comes to  
New Amsterdam”

BERNARD PERSON learned the journalistic trade on the *Dordrechtsche Courant*, Dordrecht, Holland. Associate editor and later London correspondent of the *Telegraaf*, Amsterdam, 1915-1925. Staff correspondent of *International News Service* for one year. Chief editor of the *Provinciale Groninger Courant* from 1927 to 1929, and held the same position with the *Haagsche Post*, The Hague, from 1929 to 1938. Is now the American correspondent of *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, Rotterdam, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, Amsterdam, *Haagsche Post*, The Hague.



V

*A DUTCHMAN COMES TO NEW  
AMSTERDAM*

*By Bernard Person*

I

IF one has not lived in a country for at least two years, he has not gotten at the soul of its people, but his first impressions are still fresh. He recalls the thrills of the first acquaintance, which are apt to become vague with the passing of years. It is an amusing game later to recall these observations, superficial as they were, in order to check whether first impressions are the best, as the French proverb says.

When I left the Old World I took with me the European idea that I was coming to a world that was exclusively materialistic, a world living at a tempo difficult to cope with, especially in the City of New York. A world where men were slaves to their work and women were slaves to their pleasures.

"An American has but one ambition—that of making money," said an elderly friend. "He is a man without culture. Take at least your classics with you."

"I will tell you about the American," said another; "he does not give himself time for breakfast, rushes to his

subway station, pushes everyone aside, for he has no manners, runs to his office, puts his legs on his desk, and then will waste an hour discussing a baseball game."

With another friend I discussed my future home. A Dutchman likes to make his home his castle.

"I would not bother much about that," my friend said, "because you will be moving in a short time as all Americans do."

I protested. "When I establish a home I expect to remain contentedly and happily for several years."

"Impossible!" he scoffed.

"But if I *wish* to remain?" I insisted.

"Then your house will be demolished under you."

I dried the perspiration from my forehead. "How is the food?" I meekly asked.

"Bad and monotonous," he sentenced; "from the West Coast to the East, everywhere the same. It seems as if restaurant keepers, railroads included, conspired to serve similar food on the same day."

"What is served to you as a guest at private homes? Are they also in the plot with the restaurant people?"

"Chicken, chicken, chicken," he replied wearily.

There was a painful silence. Our informant was our dinner guest at The Hague—and the course to come was chicken!

He remained several hours and gave us more of his tips: "Take all your furniture with you, because in America there are but three kinds of furniture, the entire country being standardized. Individuality is *verboden*. Never put

your shoes outside your hotel door, for the chambermaid will think you wish to dispose of them. Americans are too proud to polish shoes. The result is that people go about with their shoes unshined. And, by the way, be on good terms with Ole. If not you will have a hell of a life."

"Who is Ole?"

"Ole is the Swedish janitor of your apartment house. If he doesn't regularly get his reasonable tip, you must not expect reasonable service."

At his departure he stroked our little son on the head. "Poor kid," he said, "over there at school he will learn to box excellently, but he won't become much wiser."

## II

It is desirable that you Americans know what is being said about you abroad. It may make you cautious in *your* judgment of foreign ways. It is very picturesque if you imagine that every Dutchman, for instance, wears wooden shoes, pantaloons and short jacket, when in truth this is an anachronism save in a few villages on the sea. The cute little houses with stepped gables many of you think we live in were declared uninhabitable many years ago by our strict building authorities. They have been replaced by dwellings so modern in conception, so light in color and so practical in housing that they serve as models to other countries. Groups of architects from England, France, etc., have repeatedly visited Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and other towns, to learn

our style of building, and return to their countries enthusiastic about what they have seen. How many Americans are aware of this?

How many know, just for curiosity, that the combined populations of Holland (eight millions) and her colonies (sixty millions) amount to more than half of the population of the United States; that Holland operates tri-weekly the longest air-line in the world, namely from Amsterdam to Batavia, almost 9,000 miles; that there are seven universities in Holland; that Holland won fourteen per cent of the Nobel prizes during the first fifteen years in which they were awarded, although the proportion of her population to that of all the competing countries combined was scarcely one and one-half per cent?

Many of these things are just as unknown in America as many worthwhile characteristics of the United States are unknown on the other side of the Atlantic. Misconceptions of other nations are bound to be damaging. Therefore, the task of a foreign correspondent is a very responsible one. It is a privilege to be able to rid his readers of erroneous impressions.

The absurdity of some of the ideas about the United States cited above, becomes clear immediately to every Hollander settling in this country. How anyone can say that the American has no culture is a puzzle to me. American books are being read by thousands in the Netherlands and highly appreciated both in the original text and in translation. This "uncultured" country, by the way, possesses in The New York *Times* the finest achievement of journalism in the world.

Materialistic? There is surely no getting away from the fact that I have not yet come across one American who is averse to making money. But it certainly would take some trouble to find such a "rare bird" in my own or in any other country. The simple truth is that amassing big capital in your country is (or was?) easier than it is in other countries, as original ideas and business acumen are better rewarded here than elsewhere. A second truth should be added immediately: there is probably no country in the world where accumulated fortunes are so liberally spent for the benefit of science, art, and philanthropy.

Bad manners? The fact that your papers used as headline news the jovial gesture of Vice-President Garner when he was said to have slapped the back of King George proved sufficiently that this was "news" and not routine. I believe that in many instances what is merely rusticity or simple joviality is misunderstood as bad manners.

Surely when the British in Tientsin continued to dress for dinner and refused to give up their cricket game when the Japanese cut the food supply by electric wire barriers, they gave proof of a character which commands respect. But if an important American refuses to wear a stiff shirt at a state function, he gives proof of his independence of character in his own way.

If we in Europe say "good-morning" and "good-bye" whenever we enter a shop, it is done simply as a custom. It has nothing whatever to do with good manners. If we in our business offices do so much hand-shaking, it is often more than we can stand. In many countries, for

instance in The Netherlands, it is taken as a sign of dislike not to shake hands when presented to a man, even if the temperature is 100 degrees. If you Americans do not wish "good-morning" to a shopkeeper, you abstain from it unconsciously, I suppose, because your wish will not do him much good anyway. If you do less hand-shaking, it is because you like it just as little as Signor Virginio Gayda. If at table you first cut your meat in cubes and then put down your knife to continue eating only with your fork, you do so because apparently you think it easier. In my opinion it is just as absurd for Europeans to credit you with bad manners for that reason, as it would be for an Oriental to expect in Europe the table ritual he is accustomed to in his own country. The Oriental, by the way, will not make this petty criticism, and thereby shows his wisdom. Good manners are not proven by outward appearances, which vary in every part of the world. A man who bows from the middle for his chief, who "kisses your hand, Madame," and who never wears socks without garters, may be a pest in many other ways.

But enough of this!

### III

A trait which Europeans find it hard to get accustomed to, is the American mass mentality, the leaning toward doing and thinking the same as everyone does, toward ready-made clothes, ready-made interior decoration, ready-made ideas. To the European mind there is alto-

gether too much ready-made. This, we feel, is as pernicious to good taste and to independence of mind and spirit as is the Taylor system to the skill of the laborer. Let me give you a striking example to illustrate my point. What would you say if Rembrandt had painted ten thousand "Night Watches"? Obviously you would think it horrible. But you have no objection to an architect turning out a few hundred houses of exactly the same pattern. Industrial standardizing has made an inroad on personal taste with all of its possible diversities, and has killed it ruthlessly. Lamps and blinds are bought by the thousand by owners of tenement houses and are forced on the tenants, murdering the individuality of their homes. Routine! Look at picture theaters, cafeterias, even funeral homes run under the same management in different communities. They are exactly the same in every place. Routine! I know quite well it makes life cheaper—but "cheaper" in both senses!

Lack of individuality prevails. The "average man," because he lacks personality, is the summit of horror to the European taste. Here you even devote a prize contest to this uninteresting creature, to this colorless in-between, and it is a narrow escape if the tie he wears (if he wears one at all) is not proclaimed holy and the chewing-gum he prefers is not declared the ambrosia of the gods.

You have a natural dislike of the totalitarian State, but by killing personal taste and by raising the average to the throne I think you run the risk of cultivating a totalitarian spirit yourselves, for uniformity and totali-

tarianism are twin sisters, dressed in similar tight-fitting ready-made frocks.

I have to make another confession. Your tempo, of which I expected so much, has been a disillusion to me. "Killing" they called it in Europe. This seems undue exaggeration. The man who described to me how an American goes to his work was right only at the end of his description—the time he uses for discussing a baseball game. I ascribe the fact that so many people take their lunches in cafeterias, to the low prices, not mainly to the pressure of time. Tempo you must look for in London, Berlin, perhaps even Amsterdam. If you have heard London subway guards shouting, "Hurry on, please," you know what I mean. By the way, subway guards, *and polite ones, please*, are what New York needs most. All foreigners agree that you can find your way in underground systems abroad much more easily than here. And nine times out of ten you find no one here to direct you. If you do happen to discover one, he doesn't seem very anxious to give away his secret.

Excuse me, but let's come back to our lunch. The American business lunch is an institution, and on such occasions, at any rate, you Americans never seem to be in a hurry. Never have I spent so much time nor fared better than when American friends took me to their favorite little places. I often wonder if this is the famous American tempo. . . . It proves perhaps that your hospitality is stronger than your world-renowned "Time is money" slogan. Let me add that this "disillusion" was far from disagreeable to me.



And what tales of horror they tell about your food! I must admit that a good meal for a man who has to live on his European income is a bit more expensive than he is used to. But since when are we entitled to reproach a country for its high living standard? It is true also that every foreigner living in America has to dispense with some of his favorite dishes. The Hollander, for instance, lacks his tender beefsteak with meltingly soft green peas, his genuine and low-priced flet of sole (which in American restaurants is often no sole, but haddock or flounder), his "fresh Dutch herring" (an unequaled delicacy). But how many epicurean dishes your kitchen provides to take their place! Above all, how hygienic is your treatment of the food generally, how healthy is the composition of the menu! The foreigner eagerly adopts your special liking for the tasty celery, your healthy tomato and fruit juices, your abundance of crisp salads. The meal finished, he rarely has that "knockout feeling" that he knew so well at home after a copious dinner!

Your women are emancipated in the true sense. Not only may they vote, but they are no kitchen slaves, which is worth even more. A true Dutch matron passes fully a quarter of the day in her kitchen, testing complicated soups and sauces for hours, collecting in her clothes and her hair all the perfumes of the coming meal—unless, of course, she has a cook or a servant to whom she leaves the task. She is a model of self sacrifice, but she wrongs herself. The American woman has been freed of this servitude by her modern Siegfried: the manufacturer of cans and dressings.

## IV

So we have arrived at the American woman who, according to the European fable, is "a slave to her pleasure"; who in European eyes is either a goose, an unrivaled flirt, a vamp, or, worst of all, a film star.

What utter nonsense!

I am afraid the press is not quite innocent of this slander. Newspapers are inclined to floodlight the few who are already conspicuous enough by themselves. Those who quietly go their way without drawing attention, those who live for the common welfare, for the well-being of society, are not the ones who are awarded banner headlines and alluring snapshots. The role American women play in cultural life is a revelation to the foreigner. It was even a revelation to the writer, who for a quarter of a century followed pretty closely everything written about the United States in Dutch and foreign papers. This fact, I repeat, is characteristic of the lack of understanding which people even so friendly as Americans and Hollanders have of each other. Such misconceptions are tragic in the case of peoples who, by nature, are each other's critics, the more so if the journalists are only allowed (as happens to be the case in certain countries) to write with one eye fixed on the whip of their tamer.

The first women I met in this country were the principals of the schools I visited with a view to placing my children, and the librarians I applied to for reference books. I think these professions are more or less repre-

sentative of the intellectual American woman, and so I got an impression of her, right from the start. Honestly, I had never met such fine, intelligent, high-spirited women. Their eyes beamed with kindness, poise and culture. A foreigner to them is not an inferior, but rather someone calling for special consideration, even interest. As to the principals, their interest in the pupils entrusted to them is deep and sincere. The love they surround foreign children with, is really touching.

Your schools, I think, are imbued with humanity. I was thrilled when I saw my children's first progress report. Such items as "Self-reliance," "Responsibility," "Courtesy," "Thoughtfulness of others," were brand-new to me. American schools build up character, not a kind of living encyclopedias, and I think this is admirable. I need hardly say that the "poor kids" who evoked the sympathy of my Holland friends feel extremely happy, although they had visited the nicest schools in Holland and didn't know a word of English when they went to school here for the first time. As a matter of fact, they were not keen about going, but when they came home on the first day, half of the class came with them. "They have all come with us," they shouted beamingly, "may they come in?" They made friends from the first day. Consequently, after a month they spoke English. They think the school is just "swell," and, strange as it may seem, they complain about being free on Saturdays, which they were not accustomed to at home. They were one or two years ahead of their classmates in arithmetic. A much-heard complaint against the very thorough in-

struction in Holland is that curricula are overburdened and that children therefore enjoy their youth too little. In my opinion the American school system offers great advantages. A happy youth has lasting value for life.

## v

A surprising element in American society is the worker. Laborers probably constitute the element that profited most by this great Republic's democratic principles. There is no other democracy in the world where labor has won the social position it enjoys here. And the workers are aware of it. Their attitude leaves no doubt about that. They go about as men amongst their equals.

It is this self-assertive attitude that is completely new to the European and that is bound to startle him, as he has always been accustomed to workers with a more or less submissive bearing. A worker in Holland, for instance, will knock at the door timidly before entering any room, take off his cap, ask if it suits you to have the job done straight away, work as noiselessly as possible, never smoke whilst in your house, and disappear just as modestly as he arrived. You will offer him a cigarette or a cigar of the cheaper kind many people have in stock for the purpose, or else you may offer him a dime. If you don't he will be just as polite.

Shortly after I arrived on this soil, an electrician came to work in our house. After a melodious "Good morning, boss," which sounded a little bit ironical to me, he set to work, whistling a complete opera, very correctly but

rather shrilly. Eventually he came to inspect the fittings in my study, where I was sitting before my typewriter. After a non-committal talk about the weather, to my utter amazement he sat down opposite me at the desk, lit a cigarette, offered me one, and asked:

"What's your line, anyway?"

I readily excused him for making a *risqué* remark when hearing the word "journalist." A Dutch worker would not have said anything of the kind, but he would perhaps have thought it, and the former thing surely is more honest.

The attitude of this first worker whom I met in the New World, and which so startled me, proved to be pretty normal. The gardener usually takes my arm when going around the house to look at the shrubs that need to be trimmed. The carpenter chides me for smoking too much. Not only have I adapted myself to this new state of affairs, but I now feel vividly (whereas in Europe it was merely a vague theory with me) that a country is bound to be happier in proportion as it has fewer slaves.

I am not going to exaggerate or generalize. I am quite well aware of the fact that America, like other countries, has lots of workers who are to be considered as "slaves of economy," and I will not speak of the pitiable army of the jobless. It cannot be denied, however, that the American worker is not looked down upon for the sole reason that he is a worker. In this respect he has no doubt a great advantage over his fellow worker in many European countries. This is another instance where the New World is more humane than the Old.

Surely things have not always been as they are now, and it is even a question whether the present status will be maintained. In certain circles there is a growing reaction against the power attained by Labor. Languishing business, declining profits, the absence of a strong recovery are among the causes of this reaction. Such causes, however, may be temporary. Matters become more serious if certain groups of laborers prove themselves unworthy of their improved status. This would not only be unfair toward their employers, but in my opinion even more so toward their fellow workers who *do* play the game, inasmuch as it tends to create with the public an unfavorable state of mind that would hit the labor world generally.

## VI

Much has been written of the difficulties the foreign sections at the New York World's Fair encountered with the American labor unions. I interviewed one of the men sent over by the Dutch government. The worker, a union man, and as he himself asserted, rather "reddish" in his political views, felt very bitter at the conduct of the American laborer and of the unions.

"It is well and good," he said, "to be properly organized; that's what we are in Holland. But we, as union members, feel our responsibilities. We take pride and pleasure in good work. My boss was working with the architect of the interior of the pavilion, and I myself made the pieces bit by bit in Holland. Now we arrive

here and have to stand back and have to look on, watching them bungle and make a mess of it.

"My boss and I arrived together," he went on, "when a group of eight men were trying to let down a tank for the model to show how we keep water out of the soil. In Holland, three of us could have done in half an hour what eight men couldn't accomplish in an hour and a half. We watched and noticed that they deliberately pushed the tank out of position each time it went the right way by giving it just a little sideways push, which prevented its being let down. At last my boss, taking off his coat, pushed the fellows aside, took hold of the rope, and then the row started. You should have been there! We were not allowed to interfere, and if it had not been for Professor Rosse, the executive architect of the pavilion, who took my boss away with him, he would have knocked one of the men down. This happened on the first day, and it was the end of the job on the tank. The workers called a strike.

"To get a better understanding of the way the unions are conducted over here," the man continued, "I talked quite a bit with one of their delegates, and I admit that conditions are very much different here. Still I must say I don't like their methods at all. Although I am getting the high American wages as long as I am working here, I'll be glad when I can pack up my tool chest and go back to Holland. I guess the workers here, having seen how 'the big boys' make money taking advantage of opportunities, try to do the same. But they overlook an important thing, and that is this: it doesn't pay in the long

run. They are slow, and they often don't know their trade. Under such circumstances labor gets too expensive and the wealthy lose interest in having work provided."

My Dutch informant went on telling how at the Fair the men would run off to the telephone half of the time inquiring whether a carpenter or an iron-worker should drive in a screw. "As I am a foreman," he said, "I have twelve carpenters under me, some painters, ten electricians, the necessary iron-workers, case-openers and cleaners. There are usually one third of the men running off, and I have to hunt for them. I find them resting, or somewhere strolling in the grounds, or sometimes asleep—believe me or not. Occasionally a stranger, a rum-looking fellow, turns up. Asked what his business is, he tells me he is coming to see that his men are not working too hard. Then there was the painters' delegate who, after fifteen minutes' work, took an hour's rest. 'Take it easy,' he used to say."

The American worker, my informant asserted, looked at the World's Fair job as a kind of holiday: make as much as you can and do as little as possible.

The Hollander was anxious to get everything in shape before the arrival of the architect for the interior. He decided to meet this gentleman at the dock and prepare him, knowing that the architect was a man who likes to make headway. In his absence an iron-worker was to drive screws into a curved bar of highly polished aluminum which was part of a beautiful information desk in



the Netherland pavilion. It was a splendid piece of workmanship executed in Holland. The architect, on arriving, stood aghast when he noticed that the screws were driven in crooked. Every screw was at sixes and sevens. One of the delegates was called, and when he was asked if he considered this good work he had to admit that it was pretty poor. They tried to fix it, but did not succeed.

"I could give you lots of similar examples of bad workmanship," he assured me. "One of the electricians took a whole day to fix a lamp, which would take one of our men half an hour. Toward the opening we expected them to hurry on a little bit, but they were poor sports and again 'took it easy' instead. We ourselves worked like dogs after they were gone; only then could we make headway. And don't think that a cleaner of floors would clean tables, or wipe a glass plate. Specialized labor is all right for large plants and factories; to apply it to the work at the pavilion was killing.

"I could continue like that for hours. Their slowness in hanging up the textiles, which we had started to do ourselves until we were stopped, was exasperating! It took a man from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m. to hang up one piece. The electricians were not able to connect the motor for the fountain on the porch of our pavilion; it has consequently played only for two minutes on the opening day. The only skilled workers we met were the linoleum-layers. I must even admit that they have it all over us. But this was contract work. It was impossible to have other jobs done by contract. Therefore labor expenses ran unexpectedly

high, and consequently many of our projects had to be abandoned owing to lack of money. Lighting effects had to be simplified; the cooling system had to be changed; the basin of the magnificent mosaic fountain remains empty, etc., etc."

"How about your political feelings? Are you still a Red?" I asked jokingly.

For a moment he was taken aback. Then he said:

"That has little to do with it. I can tell you that we in Holland are about one hundred years ahead of the men here in our political convictions. Of course we need unions, but we feel in Holland that the job is the principal thing, and unless they develop here a greater community spirit the labor unions' methods, I fear, will lead to their own bankruptcy."

I have quoted this Dutch worker at length, as I believe that many can profit by it. His story has since been confirmed by experiences in other pavilions. What steps have been taken by the unions? Here was their chance to show that the union leadership stands for decency and frowns upon abuses. Did they disapprove of the obstructive tactics of several groups of workers? They did not. They vehemently declared they did not wish their members to work at European hunger wages. If anybody had really made such a demand they would have been perfectly right. But nobody did.

The danger involved in such an absence of real leadership is that public opinion may generalize, saying: "You see, that's what we have to put up with all the time." Of course, the World's Fair is a case in itself, but the news-

paper reader may not realize it. The publicity given to such unfortunate happenings may do much harm to the labor movement for years to come. I have discussed these incidents with simple workers who frankly said: "It's a racket." It is unaccountable to me, therefore, that leaders should fail to see and suppress such abuses. Nobody ever suffered from owning up to a fault.

I do not want to be unjust to anyone. Let me add, therefore, that a labor friend with whom I talked the matter over, warningly said to me: "Of course there's something wrong. But don't judge too hastily. Try to find out *what's behind it*." I tried—but I ran into a wall. Maybe time will prove that the Fair workers have been judged too hard, and that the real culprit(s) should be sought elsewhere. For the sake of labor I hope so.

At any rate things like this should not happen.

By the cooperation of government and unions the American worker has reached a status to which he is entitled and which assures him a decent living. It depends greatly on himself whether he will keep what he has. Neither in foreign nor in home politics can lasting good be expected from mere power policy. It is impossible to eliminate ethics. These must be applied by both social groups, for love cannot be one-sided. Employers should recognize the worker's title to a living existence. The worker should loyally put his heart into his job. The usual complaint is that both sides fail to see the other man's point. As long as this goes on there will be labor trouble, even in this country, richly blessed as it is with worldly goods.

It is of paramount importance, however, that labor choose the best leaders obtainable, just as the nation as a whole requires a wise leadership. This is particularly true here in America, as "you Americans" are easily swayed to one side or the other, and react with the swiftness and spontaneity of a healthy child.

VI

ANTONIO IGLESIAS

*Mexico*

“Candid Comment from a  
Mexican Cousin”

ANTONIO IGLESIAS, born in Campeche, Mexico, 1903, studied in Campeche and New York City, receiving a B.S. in Journalism from New York University in 1930, and an M.A. in History from Columbia in 1932. Began to write on American life and customs for *El Universal Gráfico* of Mexico City in 1929, became regular contributor to *El Universal* in 1933, and in 1934 became its Staff Correspondent in New York.

## VI

### *CANDID COMMENT FROM A MEXICAN COUSIN*

*By Antonio Iglesias*

#### I

**B**ECAUSE I was born next door to you, as it were, my cousins and neighbors of the United States, and because for the last sixteen years I have lived, studied and worked in New York, I feel that I ought to tell you candidly what I have seen, felt and thought, as a Mexican, in and about the United States of America.

I must begin by telling you that historically and culturally I feel that I am older than you are. You see, for instance, even before Columbus had discovered the island which he wisely called San Salvador, what is now Mexico City was the capital of the great Aztec empire under the name of Tenochtitlán, already a metropolis of great wealth and beauty, as either William Prescott or Archibald MacLeish can tell you. Then again in Yucatán your own archeologists are now helping to unearth two Mayan cities of majestic grandeur; Uxmal and Chichen-Itza, which bear eloquent and silent witness to a thriving Indian civilization that flourished long before the audacious pale-skins had the temerity to set foot on

the New World. I am telling you this because we Mexicans are not only conscious of that pre-Cortesian greatness but are growing to be very proud of it. You, on the other hand, are a bit ashamed of your early relations with the redskins, and at the present time it seems that you have a desire also to feel proud of your Indian past—if you could.

If you consider for a moment our respective historical origins, and if you care to make a few simple comparisons, you will easily see that while the Pilgrim Fathers were still shooting it out with the Indians on what is now the Boston Common, Mexico City already was the proud capital of the far-reaching Viceroyalty of New Spain. And when Harvard College was a struggling school for Protestant divines, the University of Mexico was a great center of theological and humanistic learning, educating men as great as Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora (1645–1700).

I have seen the old courthouse where the witches were tried and sentenced in Salem. I have also read something about the motives and conduct of that trial. You, on your own part, know something of what many of your historians call “the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition.” But please allow me to tell you that in the year of the Lord 1692 the royal *Audiencias* of New Spain were dispensing a higher justice than that meted out to the hapless “witches” of Salem.

When it comes to what our ancestors did to the Indians, we Mexicans have it all over you in matters of humanity, fair play and common justice. For your stern



puritanical ancestors the only good Indian was the dead Indian. Even after religious intolerance had lost its edge, your western pioneers acted on the principle that the natives were not human, that they possessed neither divine nor human rights, and that the best way of dealing with them was literally to shoot them to hell.

The Spanish Conquistadores were not, of course, very tender with the Aztecs, the Zapotecs, the Mayans and the other Indian tribes they found in New Spain. In their mines and their agricultural *encomiendas* the conquistadores and subsequent *señores* that came from Spain exploited the natives like beasts of burden by the thousands. The slaves of the conquering Aztecs merely became the serfs of their newer lords. This system of peonage and feudal tutelage was perpetuated by the independent Mexicans themselves up to the beginning of the present century. The Mexican Indian still has to be redeemed. But that redemption began with the Conquest because the missionaries who came with the *conquistadores* protected the natives, from the very first, from the exploitation and cruelty of their new masters. Then came the enlightened Laws of the Indies which explicitly recognized the human rights of the Indians and granted them a definite civil and political status. Again, throughout the colonial period the Franciscans and the Jesuits baptized the natives in large numbers, educated them and taught them trades and crafts which their descendants are still practising.

In a sense, of course, the Indians themselves were partly responsible for the different treatment they received in the United States of America and in Mexico,

for while the Northern redskins were nomads who resisted by force the advance of European colonization, and so had to be driven off the ground by force, the Indian tribes of Mexico lived in settled communities and accepted passively the forceful domination of the Spaniards.

As a result of such different conditions we find that today the remaining redskins of North America live very much beyond the pale of western culture, in reservations given to them by their former relentless enemies, and having their civil rights protected by an alien State of which they are the wards. In Mexico, on the other hand, the Indians are an integral part of the life of the country, enjoy all civil and political rights, marry freely with the mestizos and the whites and, at least in the opinion of many honest and earnest thinkers, constitute the brightest promise of a rapidly changing civilization.

In the matter of western expansion and colonization you are very far ahead of us Mexicans. In the course of a century and a half your sturdy and heroic ancestors were able to transform a wilderness into a flourishing empire that today extends from the shores of the Atlantic to those of the Pacific. This empire of yours is so vast, so rich, so prosperous and so varied that you proudly—though somewhat exaggeratedly—call it *a Continent*. Your western expansion has been so successful that at the present time the only frontiers left for you to conquer are those of the mind, the heart and the spirit, as your most advanced intellectual and spiritual leaders are telling you.

We Mexicans have not been so fortunate, and the Mex-

ican governments of today are facing problems of colonization that Thomas Jefferson solved as President during the first decade of the nineteenth century. At the present time there are in Mexico large areas, like the young state of Quintana Roo, and the home of the Yaqui Indians in Sonora, where the man of European origin has hardly penetrated. There are many Indian tribes that are still living in a state of savagery and wretched poverty. Catholic missionaries are heroically going to preach the Gospel of Christ, *for the first time in history*, to the wild Indians of Tarahumara. And many lay teachers who have been sent by the Federal Government to teach the Indians to read have had their ears cut off. Complex problems of settlement and colonization, of land distribution and land grants are still complicating the already complicated social and economic problems of the country, and the exigencies of contemporary immigration and modern investments form a queer contrast with a land hungering for men, in a country bent on preserving its independence and distinct individuality.

Because of the admirable thrift, self-reliance and individual enterprise of your pioneers and settlers, and of the great wealth accumulated by the trading cities of your Atlantic seaboard, you were able to pay out of your own national wealth the great price of your western colonization. To be sure, you borrowed some capital in Europe, especially in England and Germany, to finance the construction of certain of your railroads and inland waterways; but, for the most part, you paid for your own industrial and commercial development out of your own

collective pocket. We Mexicans have not been so fortunate. Ours has been, from the very beginning, what is now called a colonial economy. That means that in order to develop our natural resources we have been compelled to borrow capital abroad, to sell our raw materials in foreign markets, and to import most of the manufactured products that we consume. We also lack your economic self-reliance, your thriftiness and your practical inventive genius. We are not as hard-working as you are, and, to our way of thinking, financial success is not the highest form of human achievement.

Just to give you a faint idea of how antithetical our economic presuppositions can be to yours, let me mention the much-debated question of property rights. According to the fundamental principles of your constitutional law, the individual in the United States of America owns, let us say, a plot of land in perpetuity and forever, from the zenith to the nadir, and, with few exceptions plainly stated by the law, can do with it whatever he pleases. With us it is altogether different in this vital matter. From the very beginning of the Conquest the subsoil has always and inalienably belonged to the State. That perpetual and superior right can never be ceded or renounced by the State. And the only thing that the government can do is to grant individuals or corporations the right to exploit the subsoil for a definite period of time—such right being limited always by the superior rights of the State itself.

I do not have to remind you that this juridical difference alone has given rise in recent years to heated journal-

istic debates and endless political controversies. And it is in vital matters such as this that both of us have to exercise the noble virtues of patience, tolerance, goodwill and enlightened understanding. In this delicate matter of personal property rights you can easily see, that for a Mexican to say that the North Americans are blind worshipers of the Almighty Dollar, and for an American to say that the Mexicans are a bunch of thieves, really does not help to settle anything, but, on the contrary, makes the existing confusion still more confounded.

## II

And now that I have touched upon controversial matters I might as well grab the big bull by the horns and mention some of those national or collective traits that tend to intensify our neighborly misunderstandings. To our Mexican eyes you appear to be too rough and ready, imperious, meddlesome, energetic, overactive, athletic and hurried. The average Mexican considers you imperialistic, aggressive, despotic, enterprising, stubborn and materialistic. In the words of Rubén Darío, you join the cult of Hercules to that of Mammon; yet, paradoxically, as we see it, you worship the Bible also and swear by it, you believe in progress, in humanitarianism, in the redemptive power of material inventions, in the universal validity of democracy, in the practicality of individual action, in novelty, in bigness, in speed. You can be simultaneously deeply religious and foxily practical. Your most representative artists are not the poets, the painters and

the musicians whom your young civilization has produced in good and worthy numbers, but the architects and the engineers who built the fairy magic of your practical dreams into skyscrapers and in your suspension bridges make poems of steel.

With deep regret and anguish I must tell you candidly that we Mexicans do not share some of your highest ideals and noblest dreams. As a people we Mexicans are externally soft and languid while internally we are hard and cruel. We are romantic and chivalrous, and though we find it very hard to believe in and practise fair play as you understand it, we do believe in personal honor and in the highest obligations of friendship. We are lazy and dreamy, but none can question our bravery, our audacity, and our stubborn resistance to all forms of tyranny. Because we believe passionately in the greatness of our Indian and Spanish past, we have an unconquerable faith in the greatness and the grandeur of our future. We are proud and haughty to a degree, and our patriotism is extremely touchy; but we easily sacrifice our all to the highest ideals we can conceive, and our heroic quixotism knows no limitations. The best among us believe in poetry, live by history, feed on philosophy, are familiar with theology, and strive to acquire a well-rounded and harmonious culture. One of our finest contemporary thinkers, José Vasconcelos, has prophesied that "Through my race the Spirit will speak," and many of us believe in that prophecy and are laboring for its realization.

And now that we are treading on the thorny ground of comparisons I might as well tell you of some hidden anal-

ogies that have come to my notice in the course of these sixteen years. Take, for instance, the awful habit that Mexicans have of leaving everything for tomorrow, *hasta mañana*. At first sight it seems that *hasta mañana* and "do it now" can have absolutely nothing in common. Furthermore, you are not satisfied with trying to do everything today, but you are always endeavoring to plan and to do the work of tomorrow before the morrow comes. And yet, looking into it carefully, you rely as much as we Mexicans do on a wonder-working, pregnant future which you choose to call "Progress," instead of *Mañana*. And to that "Progress" you leave a great many things that you are reluctant to tackle yourselves.

Or take the matter of peonage, which has been amply discussed in your newspapers and magazines for the last twenty years. No Mexican can deny that from the time of the Conquest to the beginning of this century the Mexican peon was a creature without civil or political rights, something like a beast of burden, a serf attached to the soil and the meek victim of his masters. This state of actual slavery has given your holier-than-thou politicians and journalists a golden opportunity to show how the Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, Nordic civilization of North America is far superior to the Catholic, Indohispanic civilization that extends from the Rio Grande to Cape Horn.

And yet upon close examination much the same state of peonage is found to exist even today in some of your Pennsylvania mines, in some of your industrial baronies, and in some of your Southern plantations. And in

spite of the Bill of Rights and of all constitutional guaranties, in spite of the abolition of slavery effected in this country more than half a century ago, and in spite of all the victories that organized labor has won since the turn of the century, you still have thousands of men buying their food in company stores with company money, living in shacks improvised by their masters to herd them in, kept in submission by company police. In some of your southern states the share-croppers live in a state of peonage, and in these days of economic depression thousands of families are roaming the South and the West like veritable pariahs. As for your Negroes, do they really enjoy all of their constitutional rights, or are they more or less like the Untouchables of India?

## III

After having made some unpleasant comparisons, let me mention something that I have always admired, namely, your civic virtue. How law-abiding you are! To a Mexican your faithful observance of innumerable laws and regulations is a perennial source of wonderment. The impersonal red and green signals directing traffic all over the United States are as efficient as though a policeman were there to enforce their silent commands. There are large Latin American cities in which traffic lights have been tried and found wanting, because a policeman was needed at every corner to compel obedience to the signals. Why, even your politicians obey traffic rules! Although sometimes I do hear of someone who "knows



the judge" and can thus hope to escape the penalty for some minor traffic offense!

You may protest audibly against the sales tax every time you buy a package of cigarettes, but you pay it every time just the same. If your city government decides that on the night of a given Saturday you are to change from standard to daylight-saving time, you just advance your watches and clocks one hour and think no more about it. Your faith in the law is so complete that you even tag prohibition amendments to your Federal Constitution to make all your people sober, and prohibit gambling by law to keep people from parting adventurously from their money. To be sure, the law has always been kind to you. Between you and your laws there has always been a relation of intimacy and camaraderie that is wholly lacking in other countries. As a matter of fact, you have always made your own laws and have devised your regulations slowly and wisely as you needed them. In this sense you are truly and fully democratic.

With us the State has always been something different in this respect. To us the State has always been something of an imposition clamped on our daily lives by force from above. You see, in one way or another our governments have always been dictatorial. And always the typical Mexican has felt a keen delight in violating those regulations which appear to him as an unwarranted imposition on his personal liberty. To tell the plain truth, we Mexicans are anarchists at heart, and to our way of thinking and feeling the right of revolt—the violent protest against an act of tyranny—is a sacred, inalienable

right. That is one reason why our history is so full of uprisings, revolts and revolutions; why it is so difficult to govern us. And, strange to say, that is one reason why we have had so many dictatorial governments. For only a strong, inflexible authority can master and guide the collective wills of a rebellious people—for a while.

Then there is something which we Mexicans admire without reservation, to wit, your democratic spirit. I make this distinction because although your political democracy still leaves much to be desired, your democratic social attitude is very genuine and very beautiful. For you, all those odious distinctions of class, position, social origin, and so forth, have no real meaning. There are, to be sure, a great many snobs among you. But to the immense majority of you a man is as good as his accomplishments, and all men are worthy of respect. Then, again, every true American is a self-respecting individual and a person fully conscious of his personal rights before the law and before his fellow men. And, contrary to a current misconception, every American who is worth his salt is a distinct personality, a definite human being who has no resemblance whatever to the standardized robot pictured by pseudosociologists and would-be critics. Mind you, I am not forgetting your unjust treatment of Negroes and the subtle, protean forms of your economic bondage. What I am emphasizing is the friendly, human, democratic and Christian character of your daily social relations.

In this matter you Americans are far ahead of my people. For in spite of democratic constitutions and pop-

ular revolutions, in spite of the blending of races and the gradual disappearance of caste distinctions, we Mexicans retain many of those feudal relations of lord and vassal, of master and servant, which we inherited from the conquering Spaniards. In Mexico there are still very wide gaps between the professional and the illiterate man, between the employer and his employees, between fathers and sons. In Mexico the educated White knows in his heart that he is superior, and the ignorant Indian knows that he is inferior, and, all democratic pretensions to the contrary notwithstanding, they both think and feel and act accordingly. In Mexico, even today, family and social connections do count, nepotism is a potent factor in business and in politics, and social ostracism is a dire calamity. The fundamental distinction I am trying to make here can be expressed in short as follows: while in the United States of North America democracy is a living reality to a great extent and is always a fighting faith, in the United States of Mexico it is only a fervent wish and a pious hope.

There is something else which we greatly admire in you: your amazing economic productivity. On this plane your capacity amounts to sheer genius. With what ingenuity you have exploited and utilized your natural resources! How enormous your industrial production is! In the course of two hundred years you transformed your country from a handful of English colonies into an immensely wealthy world empire with tremendous potentialities for industrial and financial expansion.

By a single flip, as it were, the World War changed

you from a debtor to a creditor nation. And at the present time, despite your very serious economic depression and the stiff competition you have to face in foreign markets, you are sitting economically on top of the world, as your slang graphically puts it. But, alas! as nothing human is perfect, your economic distribution now lags far behind your economic production and unless you learn quickly to distribute your wealth more evenly by peaceful means you are heading for a lot of trouble. In this particular aspect of life any comparison between yours and Mexican economy would be absurd, and all I can say is that in economic matters we Mexicans are your eager imitators for the present and your very reluctant servants.

Your well-nigh omnipresent practicality is another source of admiration and wonderment for us. Indeed it can be detected everywhere in your civilization: in your interpretations of Christianity, in your higher education, in your ethics and in your arts. By means of his legendary kite, that typical American, Benjamin Franklin, discovered the nature of the fire from heaven and, instead of writing a philosophical disquisition on it, invented the lightning rod to render it harmless to man. Then came another typical American, Thomas Alva Edison, and invented a great many ingenious devices to make that heavenly fire light your houses and your streets at night.

Your test of Truth is thoroughly pragmatic: "What is the use?" you ask, and then, "Does it pay?" You even put classical music to good use, and your Tin-Pan Alley virtuosi can cut even Wagner in little pieces and make

juicy turtle soup out of his Nordic revelation. Your innumerable inventions for daily use are eloquent and noisy proofs of your practical genius, and even with his eyes shut any man can see that you have put scientific knowledge to work. When it comes to philosophy, a go-getting *thinker* like the late Arthur Brisbane can turn all the philosophers, all the poets, and all the prophets inside out and write daily and Sunday oracles for the daily papers.

In this matter again you have it all over us Mexicans. Because as a people we are not practical at all. Thousands of Mexican Indians spend their lifetimes dressing fleas, or carving bits of wood into strange designs of no earthly use, or painting chicken feathers to make beautifully realistic pictures of cock fights. Musicians and popular minstrels and verse-mongers of all sorts abound among us, and all our institutions are thick with utterly useless parasites. You say that time is money, and you live by the clock, while for the average Mexican Indian, time is a mysterious, indefinite and endless entity that cannot possibly be measured. Some of our constitutional guaranties and many of our laws are so far removed from our everyday needs and our *mores* as to be practically non-existent, and yet we fight fierce revolutions over them and die gladly for their sake.

A North American familiar with our ways and once a Y.M.C.A. official, caught an essential difference in our psychologies when he noted that in a city in the United States a candidate for Y.M.C.A. membership first asks to see the gymnasium and swimming pool, while in a Mexi-

can city he insists on reading the Association Constitution before joining.

And now, may I say a word or two about your boundless optimism? Being men of good will, you have faith in the goodness of Man, in Democracy, in Progress, in America, and in a great many other fine ideals. Depression or no depression, for you there is always a pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow. Your whole history at its best is the concrete realization of the noble hopefulness of numberless men of courage. Even when in times like the present you hesitate and falter a little, you never doubt the ultimate triumph of your ideals. "Let Fascism and Nazism roll like a mighty flood and let Mother Europe crumble to the dust," you say in your hearts. "But Democracy shall not perish from the Earth because it will survive in the United States." Your Christian faith, your laws, your economic development, your geographical expansion, and the rich country you inhabit amply justify this strong faith of yours. Your optimism is not a pipe dream but the radiance of the wisdom of youth.

And here let comparisons end! The least said about the dark pessimism and deep distrust of my own people, the better for everybody.

#### IV

Your unconquerable optimism and your high hope are very clear signs of your youthfulness. For you are a very young people indeed. By all counts your own history began the day before yesterday. And although that very

fine French sociologist, André Siegfried, has declared your culture to be of age now, you are only a few months past twenty-one. The young men among you aspire to be and to act like boys, and while your mature men think of themselves as young men, no one in this great country of yours wants to be considered old. Your multifarious and complicated machines are not only instruments of production and transportation but, to a very large extent, playthings with which you fool and tinker endlessly, as children fool and tinker with their toys. Your love of sports, your passion for novelty, your eagerness to break all sorts of records, and the lavish admiration you bestow on gallant adventurers are also indubitable signs of your youthfulness. In your national politics, for instance, you have some fine elders such as Justice Hughes and Senators Glass and Borah, but who would dream of comparing them with, say, those frightful old men of English politics, or with those tremendous Elder Statesmen of Japan? In international politics and in diplomatic dealings you are so young as to be often awkward. And compared with your genuine youthfulness the hoary rejuvenation of contemporary Japan and the synthetic youth of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany look like cruel jokes.

And now, before I end, I must say something about that quality of yours which I admire most, namely, your idealism. In spite of your practicality, of your materialism, of your economic preoccupations, and of the strong winds of paganism that are blowing at present through your life, you are supreme idealists. Take your democratic ideal for instance. Plutocracy or no plutocracy,

you keep on believing with all your heart that all men are created equal and that government ought to be of the people and by the people and for the people. When your political democracy takes to her sickbed your most eminent medicos prescribe for her homeopathically and say that what she really needs are bigger and better doses of unadulterated Democracy. For you, Democracy is the one and only social panacea, and you have such a great faith in it that you prescribe it to everybody else as a sure-fire remedy.

Then there is romantic love in which you believe so magnificently. Year in and year out, thousands of your young people marry for love alone and with love for their only security. And in their golden and silver weddings hundreds of old couples proclaim every year their unconquerable faith in the gentle passion. For you to marry without love is something of a capital sin, and if some of your romantic reformers had their way the cessation of love would be sufficient grounds for divorce. Whenever anyone mentions concubinage or extramarital relations in your presence you become ill at ease. But if a learned judge advocates trial marriage for the sake of lasting love, you discuss his suggestions endlessly with the greatest freedom and enthusiasm.

Your love of romance often conjoins Progress with Love and daring young couples are married in airplanes high up in the air after doing all their courting, I suppose, by riding together at top speed on one motorcycle. Even your hard-headed and unromantic policemen exercise a wide tolerance when it comes to all the lovemaking that



goes on within parked cars, in roadhouses, tourist camps and public parks. And it must be Cupid who impishly blinds them to many a sight that would hit any foreign cop between the eyes. Your novels, your movies, your popular songs and most of your poems are permeated with love, and that presidential candidate of the satirical comedy who made Love his platform would have won in real life with an overwhelming majority.

I might as well end with this mention of ideal democracy and romantic love. Keep on believing in them and go on living by them and for them, and you'll be all right. That is about the best way to keep the gates of hell shut on the earth as well as beyond it.



VII

GUENTHER REINHARDT

*Switzerland*

“What America Teaches the  
Foreign Correspondent”

GUENTHER REINHARDT, born in 1904, brought up in Switzerland and Germany. Graduated from Royal College, Mannheim, and Lyceum Alpinum, Zuz (Switzerland). Graduate of Heidelberg University, post-graduate work Columbia University. Contributor to several leading Swiss and German papers. Collaborator in syndicated column appearing in over 200 United States daily papers from 1932 to 1938. Correspondent in Washington and New York for *Der Bund* of Berne. Contributor to *Current History*, *Liberty*, and other magazines.

## VII

### *WHAT AMERICA TEACHES THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT*

*By Guenther Reinhardt*

#### I

**M**OST people seem to think that foreign correspondents are the pampered aristocracy of the Fourth Estate. An eight-point by-line on the front page, a practically unlimited expense account for entertaining political bigwigs who spill the inside dope on the latest crisis over the third bottle of Napoleon brandy, a fifteen thousand dollar a year salary—those seem to be the popular conceptions about newspapermen plying their trade in foreign lands.

While this picture may be advantageous in establishing a credit rating with your landlord or lead to the unsolicited offer of a couple of free movie passes, it is as cock-eyed as the firmly rooted conviction among millions of Europeans that at one time Al Capone's machine guns actually ruled the entire United States. Years of experience have shown this writer that it is difficult to try to set Mr. and Mrs. Average American straight on the fact that a foreign correspondent of *any* particular nationality is not a superman—a Sherlock Holmes, Colonel House,

H. R. Knickerbocker, Arthur Krock and Walter Winchell rolled in one. Too many glamour books—the majority of them written by American ex-foreign correspondents abroad—have left that indelible impression. And that isn't surprising, considering how many of them were best sellers!

The true role and status of the foreign correspondent can be gauged much more accurately by an attempt to give a factual behind-the-scenes picture of a particular group of these men: the foreign correspondent in America. By picturing what America has done to him as a type and what he has done to America it is also possible to examine some aspects of life in the United States as seen from an extra-American viewpoint.

To follow a foreign journalist around the clock in a typical day's work would show how hard—how very hard, as a matter of fact—he has to work, but it would not provide any clues as to his real function in the scheme of things American. The answer will come more readily if we pose the question: What has America taught a professional news gatherer and news interpreter?

To begin with, America teaches him to be a journalist in the best meaning of the word. It does not matter how much experience a man has had abroad; he will have to come to the United States in order to learn the technique of getting his news quickly and reliably—and how to write it. That may seem a pretty broad statement, considering the fact that the foreign press corps here includes some of the most distinguished names in the international newspaper world. However, every one of those men

has gone through a more or less prolonged period of "education" after taking up his duties here before he reached his present status.

America teaches the foreign journalist to seek and, if possible, to disseminate unbiased news. A reporter in Omaha would not last another day in his job covering police headquarters if he slanted an ordinary homicide story the way most European newsmen would treat it. In some foreign newspaper accounts, for instance, the suspect arrested for alleged manslaughter would be doomed in advance because the "news" story would characterize him as "morally worthless" and "reputedly sloppy in administering his father-in-law's estate." In another country the irrelevant observation—not verified, of course—that the suspect had seldom come home for dinner on time will be used to elaborate on his probable guilt or innocence, and the facts as established by the police at the scene of the crime will be blithely ignored. In still another country a political leader is interviewed by a paper on a question of international importance. When the story appears in print the opposition paper will write cheerfully that "Mr. X stubbornly clung to the notoriously insane National-Conservative views which are leading our country straight to hell." The reader will never know what Mr. X actually said.

That sort of journalism doesn't exactly encourage accurate reporting. It is quite an education for the foreigner, therefore, to learn from his American colleagues the painstaking detail work of getting all the facts essential in writing an actual account of the who, when, where,

etc. The occasional complaints of would-be reformers of the American press that the news columns are dominated by the personal, political and economic interests of the publishers would lose much of their fervor if their proponents would take the trouble of studying the positive results of the accurate American methods of reporting as they are being gradually introduced into newspapers abroad by their American correspondents.

Another thing the foreign correspondent here learns is how to write. He may have been a literary genius at home, but the succinct reportorial style so typically American can be acquired only by conscious effort on the spot. In retrospect I find that the greatest favor anyone ever did me was that of a friendly reporter colleague of the *New York Journal* when he once handed me two slips of paper. He told me that they hung in every Hearst news room. One said: "KEEP YOUR SENTENCES SHORT," and the other proclaimed: "REMEMBER THAT THE STORY OF CREATION WAS TOLD IN 500 WORDS."

But the worries of the foreigner in America aren't over by a long shot when he has finally learned the American style of reporting and of writing. If his home office expects him to send real live news and not merely interpretative pieces, he has to do more hustling than an expert ambulance chaser. The fantastic speed and accuracy with which the major American press associations cover the news and instantaneously flash it to the four corners of the globe make it necessary for the independent foreign correspondent to be on his toes at all times. If he is unable to cable a special angle he may soon find that his home of-



fice asks, "Why keep an expensive special correspondent in America when at relatively small cost we can get all the stuff we want much quicker from the Associated Press or the United Press?"

In order to keep up with the competitive pace, the foreign correspondent will have to have the knack of developing special sources of information. That takes time and a terrific amount of effort and patience. A card index of between seven hundred and a thousand names after ten years in New York is far from being a freak oddity of a pedantic scribbler. It is as much of a necessity as a portable typewriter. That is, if you are an honest-to-goodness correspondent and go after news yourself instead of using American newspaper clippings and the news tickers as your source material.

You've got to know that at any given moment you can reach the press-relations chief of the State Department in Washington and the secretary of that famous mouth-piece for notorious criminals in New York; the assistant editor in Chicago who knows the underworld by heart and the bookkeeper in Baltimore who has all the dope on his fingertips about anything that has to do with oil; the sweetheart of the chief publicity man for the Gigantic Film Corporation, and the office manager for a small Stock Exchange firm who can explain any financial mystery, and, besides has an "in" with the Securities and Exchange Commission; the daughter of Senator Belch, who is on the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and the sergeant on night duty in the prison ward of New York's Bellevue Hospital.

Figure out for yourself what it takes to develop those contacts—and to keep them. Multiply by fifty or even a hundred: all that, it will be seen, doesn't leave much time for playing the aloof journalist who with hypocritical disdain pretends to abhor the undignified manner in which America's ace reporters and columnists get their exclusive stories. Eight out of ten foreign correspondents here will tell you with a sneer that they never read Walter Winchell. But catch them off guard and you'll find that they practically know his last Monday column by heart. I for one frankly confess that I would give my right arm (I can type with my left, anyway) if I could have just one quarter of the reliable international political information that comes Winchell's way.

If Westbrook Pegler, Dorothy Thompson, Leonard Lyons, Arthur Krock and Raymond Clapper received a dollar for every item from their columns which appears abroad as an original brainchild "From our Special Correspondent," Uncle Sam might easily double their income tax assessments.

However, little of that sort of intellectual larceny is being committed by the accredited correspondents of reputable foreign newspapers. Most of the offenders will be found among the vast army of free lancers. Each mail from America brings even to the most obscure newspapers abroad at least a dozen unsolicited articles from the U.S.A. Particularly recently, since political upheavals abroad have brought a heavy influx of refugees to these shores, there are literally hundreds of former traveling

salesmen, beauty-parlor operators, bank clerks and opera singers who suddenly blossom forth as "our special American correspondent." In some instances these mostly self-appointed journalists have made themselves so obnoxious that legitimate foreign correspondents find local news contacts closed up. That has happened because some Americans in sheer despair have reached a point where they simply regard *everyone* who claims to represent a foreign newspaper as phony. The number of rejected applications for free press passes at baseball clubs, the New York and San Francisco Fairs, and the offices of the various motion-picture concerns is eloquent proof of the size of the racket.

While on the one hand America is teaching the foreign correspondent tricks in his trade of news gathering which he could never learn at home, she has also introduced him to a sugar-coated and easily habit-forming journalistic stimulant: the mailing list. The amount of promotional and propaganda material in disguise that flows across our desks is appalling in its quantity and variety. From beautifully written feature stories—"You may use it in its entirety"—behind which lurks sales push of an automobile manufacturer, to anonymous news letters which in reality boost a second-rate movie star, the stacks of mail go on and on. Even the most experienced and wary of us learn a new trick in the art of public relations each month.

It is no wonder, then, that many a foreign correspondent has profited from what he learned from American

experts in the art of influencing public opinion. What is more natural than that he should painstakingly transmit this special American technique to his home land?

## II

If today Americans stand aghast at the orgies of organized political propaganda in certain countries abroad, and watch it upset governments and keep régimes in power, they should consider for a moment that without a doubt every propaganda expert abroad is in the last analysis—a pupil of the American press agent!

The Great American Press Agent makes things temptingly easy for a hard-working writer. All you have to do is to give him a break once in a while. At least that is what he tells you. The darky in the woodpile is that once you have become accustomed to rely on any press agent to cater to your lazy instincts—and show me the man who is devoid of them—the occasion is sure to arise sooner or later where an attempt will be made to shackle your journalistic independence—for value received.

Naturally the most dangerous pitfalls for the newspaperman who works in the United States lurk where the press agent is not plainly labeled as such; or, even worse, when he is not labeled at all. I remember vividly what seemed a corking good human-interest story about the hundreds of thousands of small American cigar-store and stationery-store dealers who are giving away paper matches out of the goodness of their hearts. Later on I discovered, in time to prevent publication of my piece,

that the man who had given it to me was a high-powered Washington lobbyist who had intended to use newspaper articles appearing on the subject at home and abroad to influence legislation affecting the match industry here.

Another thing the foreign correspondent learns in America—and in America alone—is the art of gauging trends of public opinion. In foreign countries the voice of the people regarding political, moral or social questions is more or less set. Big upheavals and swings from one direction to another are the exception rather than the rule. And, anyway, you have your newspaper's well defined and firmly established viewpoint. If you stick to it, you can't go wrong.

In the United States things are different.

The most dynamic country in the world brings forth new ideas and new trends in kaleidoscopic variety. Prohibition came and went. So did the New Era. Margin accounts, technocracy and Tom Thumb golf courses seemed to sweep the nation—only to be swept into the discard. How many foreign correspondents, here only a short while and unfamiliar with the peculiar habits of the American pendulum, filed reams of copy in those days advising their breathless readers of the amazing discovery of a social upheaval in the United States which would soon change the course of events in all quarters of the globe!

Then some day the foreign correspondent discovers that the pendulum does swing. From the world reformer's cry "Make the world safe for democracy" in two short years to the rigid isolationism which rejected the

League of Nations covenant. From the sweatshop to the Blue Eagle of the NRA—and back again to a Supreme Court veto. If you don't want to be out on a limb you literally have to catch on to the swing.

What will America's foreign policy be tomorrow? The foreign correspondent is supposed to inform millions abroad. The surer he is today of one mass trend in the United States, whether it is in the Senate or in the prairie towns—the more he must remember the wide arc of the pendulum's swing and the fact that it may reverse its direction at any moment.

But in addition to enabling him to acquire the mechanical tools for his trade, the United States does another great thing to the foreign correspondent. It teaches him about people. Abroad, in any given country, a writer sooner or later finds his national type. Once you've found your own individual typical Frenchman, Arab, Chinese, etc., you have, so to speak, your dictionary which helps to translate events and trends in a strange land in terms more or less comprehensible to the public at home.

But it takes years to find the "typical American." Even the highly scientific Institute of Public Opinion needs several thousand individuals to distil *the* average American mind. It isn't surprising then that many foreign writers never find the *Homo Americanus*. The result of this failure is the sometimes grotesque conception of America and Americans in the foreign press. And yet the United States offers the correspondent from abroad opportunities as no other country does to study, and find, that

mythical being, the representative native. The secret is that he is a composite being, at least in the cities where most of the foreign writing fraternity congregate, Washington and New York.

That brings us to an interesting question. How many working newspapermen, domestic or foreign, get very far away from their base of operations? How many foreign correspondents here know even one fifth of the United States? My rough estimate is: not one out of fifteen. You won't lose any money if you bet on this.

Wickham Steed, the grand old man of the *London Times*, once told a group of us that if he were a dictator he would pass a law making it a criminal offense for any foreign correspondent to enter the United States via the port of New York. They should be compelled, he said, to set foot on American soil at a western port and hitch-hike eastward with a statutory minimum of three months for the total duration of the cross-country jaunt. "And be sure to spend at least a couple of weeks in a Mid-Western city. Then, and then only, will you know what the America is that you write about so glibly." At that the proposal would not be half bad if applied to American journalists as well. All you have to do is to substitute "home town" for "port of entry."

Metropolitanites at editorial desks in New York may snicker and Washington wiseacres may take exception, but the fact remains that any correspondent with an open mind who has earnestly studied these United States will get his best material as an honest interpreter of American thought in Topeka, Kansas, or in Seattle, Washington, or

in Corpus Christi, Texas. The same holds true of a couple of hundred similar "provincial" cities. It may sound incredible but I have found it to be true invariably that a Rotarian from the plains of Kansas has as much up-to-date factual information on foreign affairs as a studious member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in Washington. And with equal certainty the views and predictions of the little man from Kansas came closer to the ultimate developments than the analyses and oracles of a Washington "inside dope" sheet.

## III

Of course there are many factors which contribute to the gradual change in the mental attitude which a foreign correspondent is bound to experience when he has worked for a while in the United States. One of the most fundamental of these, I believe, is American law enforcement and the American's attitude toward it. To be sure, there is on the one side the negative element of the bewilderingly large number of hundreds of separate local, state and Federal police agencies. There is the sometimes incredible laxity of small-town and big-city local police and prosecutors. But on the other hand there is the fact that in a country which does not have any sort of systematic police registration, existent even in the most advanced democratic nations abroad, you find as a whole an amazing efficiency.

It will always remain one of the most impressive phenomena to the foreigner here that the law-enforcement



officer in America is truly a friend of the people. Unlike abroad, where he is feared, no matter how much he may be respected, the guardian of the law here is popular. From the affectionately nicknamed "cop" who sees school children safely across a busy traffic intersection to the press conference of the Attorney General of the United States, whose words are printed on page one, not because the government decrees it that way but because people *want* to read them there, is that spirit of service to the community. That to my mind typifies America.

It frequently happens that when a foreign correspondent finally catches on to this true spirit of service of the American agencies responsible for law and order he has a difficult time to convince his editors thousands of miles away that he is a conscientious interpreter. The best proof for this contention lies in the treatment of American crime stories in the foreign press. Here are the flamboyant gangster yarns of the comparatively new correspondents. To them it does not matter that the old-time gangster with his stuttering machine gun is *passé*. Their stories have given entire nations the almost ineradicable impression that crime is so rampant in the United States that the average citizen can venture forth on the streets only at the constant risk of life and limb. Compare those stories with the articles of the foreign correspondents who have taken the trouble to learn about America as she really is. They write about the great educational work among tens of thousands of underprivileged youngsters done by the New York Police Department's Police Athletic League. They tell their readers of the intelligent

training of law-enforcement officers at the National Police Academy of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington. The comprehensive scientific education provided by its director, J. Edgar Hoover, is now drawing officers from faraway lands. To witness one of the graduation exercises of that institution gives a foreign correspondent a different and far better conception of American achievement and moral vigor than the hackneyed feature story about a Detroit assembly line, once so popular abroad.

## IV

Indeed, America gives something to the foreign correspondent and *does* something to him. And what does the foreign correspondent do to America?

At first sight the question in this form may appear somewhat presumptuous. What can a couple of hundred foreign reporters do to one hundred and thirty million Americans? one might ask. Yet, aside from their purely professional work, supposedly strictly an export commodity, they have some very definite sway on the American scene proper.

They are the indispensable sounding boards for most of the important American political columnists, commentators and editorial writers. When you listen to Hilman Baukhage or Dorothy Thompson on the radio on a subject of international politics you may not realize it, but the chances are that a goodly part of their script owes its final shape to an exchange of thoughts with one or more

foreign correspondents. You read an editorial in the *New York Times* or in the *Washington Post* on how the latest British step may affect the American policy. Do you realize that the writer probably argued the question back and forth over the telephone with the diplomatic correspondent for a great European journal before he set down on paper his third draft in editorial anonymity?

Or consider the American syndicated writer on political topics whose column appears in hundreds of papers throughout the land. There isn't one of them who does not get many of his foreign items, and their domestic implications, from a foreign correspondent stationed over here.

Thus, though Americans may not realize it, the foreign newspaperman exercises a good deal of influence over them via the American press and the radio.

## v

That brings us to the second, and even more important sphere of influence of the foreign correspondent in America. It can be summarized in one word: propaganda.

Ordinarily there wouldn't be anything wrong with this word. It is the most natural thing in the world for a foreigner over here in a more or less semi-official capacity to give Americans as favorable an impression of his native land as possible. To paraphrase once more the venerable Wickham Steed: "Foreign correspondents are usually the *real* ambassadors." The great majority of these men in America are honest and sincere goodwill ambassadors

of the highest personal and professional integrity. The enlightenment work in which they are engaged in addition to their reportorial duties influences Americans, to be sure, but by no means with sinister purposes or insidious effect.

But unfortunately there are others too. Theirs is a surreptitious kind of propaganda, artificially cloaked in American terms and designed to implant alien ideas on the American scene for the hidden purpose of benefiting foreign interests.

Take the case of Kurt Wilhelm Georg Lueddecke for instance. Evidence produced by a Congressional Committee shows that this newspaperman was even admitted to United States Senate Press Gallery privileges for German newspapers while in reality he was trying to convert America to Fascism by sponsoring a "hundred per cent American" magazine called *The American Guard*. On the other side of the picture is the sworn testimony before a special House committee showing that in a specific group of five experts who write in American publications on the Far East, two have definite Communist tie-ups which are being carefully concealed.

There are the two Spanish journalists who were lecturing their way across the United States, ostensibly interesting Americans in the relief needs of the starving population in Spain. Actually their aim and mission was to lobby here against the Franco régime and to rally American support for the former Republican cause.

Most of the time these propagandists get away with their tricks. Once in a blue moon one of them is exposed

and vanishes from the scene. But he is soon replaced—by a more careful publicist!

What makes this sort of thing dangerous is that investigation has shown conclusively that the American *domestic* controversial movements find most of their encouragement—and money—from these foreign sources. Hatreds and prejudices, methodically inciting one group of Americans against another, are frequently directed from abroad, despite their “American” label.

It is a matter of record that when William Dudley Pelley, ex-toilet paper manufacturer, expanded his Fascist Silver Shirts on a grandiose scale, he received aid from Rudolf Kessemeier, head of the Philadelphia office of the North German Lloyd and a member of the official Nazi organization in this country. Furthermore, with the North German Lloyd being controlled by the German government, and Kessemeier’s established connections with the Fichte Bund in Hamburg, largest Nazi agency for propaganda abroad, there can’t be much doubt that this is a typical instance of foreign influence in a “hundred per cent American movement.”

Some of the most effective agents in giving the ism rackets a respectable *American* front have chosen the disguise of newspapermen. When the government in Washington realized that the plague of foreign propaganda was becoming too serious to be disregarded, the Federal Propaganda Act of 1938 was passed. It requires a label for foreign propagandists and forces them to register publicly a lot of detailed information as to their work, actual employers, etc. So far the law has proven

almost totally ineffective. Not one out of every hundred individuals presumably falling under its scope has registered. On the other hand, a number of conscientious and highly reputable foreign correspondents who by no stretch of the imagination could be classed as propagandists have registered. They have done so simply because under the wording of the law they believed that writing and speaking in this country as well as for foreign consumption might subject them to the statute.

At this moment the United States is honeycombed with pseudo-journalists of the domestic and foreign brand who blandly gain access to restricted military areas or sell a bill of goods on "Americanism" to hundred per cent patriots for the extremists on the right, or peddle subversive revolutionary ideas camouflaged à la Washington-Jefferson-Lincoln to the boys and girls on the Left.

Much of this unnecessary stirring up of internal dissension in the United States could be avoided by the sharp limelight of merciless publicity directed at the chief trouble makers. Some of them have been able to ply their trade undetected for years on end.

It is paradoxical that the people who would make America the battleground for European isms are so eminently successful in winning adherents for their "causes" here only because the traditional American policy of fair play and aversion to police control permit them to conduct their shady business without any restrictions whatsoever. Some of them are American citizens. Others are aliens who, whether they are eligible under

the law for an American visa or not, have managed to enter the United States.

There isn't a country on earth today which does as little in combating foreign subversive influences as the United States. Americans are so sure of themselves—and so trusting—that most of them refuse to take the battle of ideologies seriously when it is carried right into their own backyard.

To be sure, there are organizations such as the Institute for Propaganda Analysis which attempt to enlighten the public. But their appeal is limited and thus it isn't surprising that practically nothing has been accomplished so far in protecting the country from becoming involved in other people's problems, served up in the shape of the most cunning appeals.

Up to a few years ago a journalist familiar with American as well as foreign temperaments and historical, political and economic factors, could have regarded the growth of essentially non-American ideas here as a passing phase. That is no longer the case. Unless something is done about it, and done soon, we are bound to witness over here some really serious pathological disruptions of the body politic with their concomitant economic disasters. We would experience for ourselves here the very things which now make the average American put aside his Sunday paper after he has read the week-end articles from Europe, and say "Thank God, this is America and such things can't happen here."

What can be done to immunize America against the

peril of becoming engulfed in violent class or racial movements from both sides? The answer in one word is: Enlightenment.

Familiarize the American people with *who* and *what* is behind the "causes" and the panaceas which lure them today in increasing numbers. Tear away the bunting of fake appeals to emotion and intellect.

To be specific: Find and show up the foreign leadership, inspiration—and money—back of the various political and ideological movements. The admirable accomplishments of Federal agencies on the domestic crime front justify the assumption that with the proper authorization, adequate funds and the necessary personnel they could do an equally effective job in getting the facts on this situation. After all in the last analysis it is no less a menace to the American home than kidnaping or dope smuggling.

Expose these movements and individuals for what they really are. Enable the American public to see for themselves that certain domestic organizations which outwardly are eminently respectable are either conscious allies or willing dupes of foreign agitators. Show them that some supposedly patriotic American outfits are doing paid work for potential enemies of the United States and that some phony liberal organizations provide a convenient cloak for spies against the national security of this country.

Show them—and the American people will take care of the rest.



VIII

NABOTH HEDIN

*Sweden*

“Education and Politics in the  
United States”

NABOTH HEDIN, born in Sweden, 1884, arrived in America in 1900; graduated from Harvard. Reporter, re-write man and legislative correspondent on the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* from 1908 to 1918. Appointed Paris correspondent in 1914, served as war correspondent with the French, American, British and Belgian armies. Covered Peace Conference for Universal Service. Freelance editorial writer for Boston papers and magazines 1922 to 1925, manager of American Swedish News Exchange since 1926. Writer on American politics for the *Göteborgs Handels och Sjöfarts Tidning* of Gothenburg, Sweden, since 1922, and is New York correspondent of the T.T., Swedish News Agency of which all newspapers in Sweden are members. Translator of *Harvest* by Selma Lagerlöf and co-editor with Adolph B. Benson of *Swedes in America*, published for the New Sweden Tercentenary in 1938.

## VIII

### *EDUCATION AND POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES*

*By Naboth Hedin*

#### I

ONE of the most fascinating aspects of American life to me is politics. It seems to be both a bread-and-butter struggle and a circus. To the direct participants—that is, the professional politicians—it has always been a serious business, and unless I am very much mistaken it is going to be less of a show also to the voters, for whether they like it or not, as I heard ex-Governor Philip La Follette, of Wisconsin, point out last winter in a talk at the Harvard Club in New York, there is going to be more and more government in business. Taxes are also likely to affect everyone more and more deeply, so that casting the ballot is going to be less of a sport and more of a grim act of self-defense. And what could be more important for a foreign-born citizen to learn than how the new country is governed, or how the average voter is educated in the use of his ballot, particularly if he does not belong to a party or does not attend political discussions, or even read more than one kind of newspaper?

Before going further into these subjects I want to make two reservations. The first is that I do not want to make easy criticisms. No one who has given the subject any thought can fail to sense how hard it is to solve the problems of civic education. The second is that I do not pretend to be an expert, either in government or adult education. I am only a newspaper reader—a man in the crowd. Furthermore, I want to add that if I point out some of the lessons that have been learned in my own lifetime in Sweden, it is not for the purpose of making comparisons, but to call attention to useful experiences from which I think the United States could now benefit.

Much political progress has also been made in my own lifetime in the United States. The first Presidential campaign I remember was that of 1900, when both McKinley and Bryan were candidates for the second time. As a non-English-speaking immigrant I had then recently arrived in an outwardly idyllic little town in western Connecticut. It was populated partly by farmers, mostly of the original colonial stock, partly by New York business men who had chosen it for their summer residences, and partly by Swedish immigrants, who furnished the cheap labor (\$1.50 for a ten-hour day) on both the farms and the estates.

The Spanish-American War was just over and the young American imperialism was then in its heyday. But, curiously enough, it was not the more recent action, either in the West Indies or the Philippines, but the Civil War which was used most in the political propaganda. "Support the Republican Party, which abolished slavery

and saved the Union," was the appeal I heard made, even to the newly naturalized voters. Lincoln and Grant were still party symbols. Mr. Bryan, to be sure, had raised the issue of imperialism, but to us Swedes in Connecticut the issue seemed pretty remote and unreal. Hadn't Sweden at various times crossed the Baltic and conquered provinces in Russia, Poland and Germany? In the meager school histories this expansion was presented as both moral and laudable in every way, particularly the Swedish participation in the Thirty Years War, which was undertaken to protect the fruits of the Reformation, the pure evangelical Lutheran faith. And weren't the swarthy Spaniards Roman Catholics, too, and hadn't they been cruel to the noble Cuban patriots? General Weyler, whose name sounded German, even if he was the Spanish governor of Cuba, was probably no better than Wallenstein, before whom the great Swedish hero king, Gustavus Adolphus, had fallen in battle. The Spaniards deserved to lose their colonies, which they had shown they could not administer humanely, and the Democratic fears about the course of empire were probably unfounded. The issues of the Civil War seemed much more real. One of the first books I had read in America was a Swedish translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and on the Sunday closest to Memorial Day, I saw the veterans of the Grand Army march. They were all Republicans, as far as I ever heard, and to me they seemed noble and heroic. At election time they marched, too, and appeared in uniform at political mass meetings, where the orators gave the "copperhead" Democrats a bad name.

I mention this recollection of the "bloody shirt" in politics to bring out the unreality that has so often seemed to me to characterize political battles in the United States. Did the voters of 1900 and 1904 understand, for instance, the implications of the growing protectionism? I have in mind especially the mid-Western farmers. In Sweden there had been no war for so long that the army and navy seemed, like the state church, venerable institutions which no one questioned, except when the terms for compulsory universal military service were lengthened. The issues I had heard debated were liquor control and an increased import duty on grain which would have a very definite and immediate effect on the cost of living. On the other hand the people in Sweden, too, have become much more conscious of their political rights and the meaning of political issues than they were in my childhood. Young people, especially, join political organizations and debate current political issues much more frequently than they used to. As a whole, American youth is not politically minded, but I think it is going to be more so very soon. And, as for war issues in politics, I think it rather remarkable that not a single general in the World War, in either the United States or France or Great Britain, has been given high political preferment. Only in defeated Germany did the people rally around a military man, Hindenburg. In the United States the only Presidential candidate so far elected on his war record has been Herbert Hoover, and he was a relief worker, a life saver, not a man killer.

## II

But, aside from this apparent unreality in political debates, of which I have, of course, become more and more aware as I have grown older, I remember I was impressed from the start by the greater use of emotion in American political oratory. In Sweden such addresses had been apt to be rather cool and reserved, and instead of the direct personal attack which still occurs perhaps a little too often in the United States, a certain irony, much more like that of France, had been generally employed. More bluntness may, perhaps, be necessary before the larger audiences in America, for unless you are on the inside or in "the know" you never get the full import of the Swedish or French innuendo. It is like the blows delivered in the close-up boxing which the audience never sees.

It is perhaps this free-and-easy American oratory, the play for laughs, which makes the average American political campaign seem like a funny show, a circus. I know there have been and still are serious, close-up debates, too, but they are all too rare. In New York City I have attended political rallies at which over a dozen orators have appeared, all saying virtually the same thing. Nor did anyone seem to be present who was not already converted. A spirited debate between the candidates for the same office would seem much more enlightening, and it is in the failure to arrange more such debates that I feel the women voters have failed to make use of their greatest opportunity. They could put political discus-

sion on a higher plane. During my newspaper days in New York, to be sure, before the woman suffrage amendment had been adopted, most of the political rallies I covered were held in rooms back of saloons.

I also know, of course, that susceptibility to highly emotional oratory is not confined to the United States. I'm told that the real source of Hitler's power over the German masses is his voice. In France I have also heard such orators as René Viviani and Aristide Briand, not to mention Jean Jaurès, and Lloyd George who in his best days owed not a little of his power to his speech making. I also lived through and covered part of the Progressive or "Bull Moose" campaign in this country in 1912 and, by comparison, the younger generation of voters do not know what pitch political fervor can reach. In Sweden only certain religious revivalists and a few temperance orators went to such limits. How much cooler in his appeal than his fifth cousin is the present Roosevelt! Even the late Huey Long was restrained and unemotional when measured by the Bull Moose standard. Father Coughlin, too, has never been able to work himself up to the high emotional pitch of the late Theodore Roosevelt. The Republican Convention at Cleveland in 1936, which I heard only by radio, went pretty far, and I am curious to see whether it will repeat itself in 1940.

The impression I received early in America that politics was partly a sport was strengthened by the apparent eagerness of so many voters to "pick a winner," as though it were a horse race. "Don't throw away your vote," is an appeal I never heard in any other country. To be on



the winning side for its own sake ought not to make any difference to those who are not looking for political employment. Only "principles," or, to be blunt, "economic interests" ought to count. I suppose this tendency to "pick a winner" accounts for the great landslides that have taken place in the United States at various times, particularly in recent years. To me it seems an unfortunate step toward "totalitarianism," and so does the general desire to conform to the habit of the majority, the fear of being different, whether in dress or manners, that is so prevalent in the United States. The prevalent American desire to "get on the band-wagon" seems to me to be a decided pre-condition for fascism.

Often a president or a figure like Colonel Lindbergh is either a universal hero, particularly immediately after an election or some popular achievement, or else he is subjected to what seems to be unreasonable abuse. I have seen that happen to Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt, as well as Colonel Lindbergh. Once Mr. Dooley said that in America triumphal arches should be built of brick, so that the crowd would have something to throw the next time the hero passed that way—a remark that was inspired by what happened to Admiral Dewey. In politics this tendency to hero worship seems dangerously undemocratic, too.

### III

Still another attitude which I noticed early in Connecticut, and which was different from that in Sweden,

was that politics by its very nature was dirty. It was proper to attend mass meetings or rallies and, of course, to vote the right ticket "straight," but I cannot recall that anyone, either in church or Sunday school, or in general conversation, urged the necessity or duty to attend caucuses or to become acquainted with the methods by which candidates were nominated or ballots prepared or tax income appropriated. Such work was done by "practical" politicians and they were not held up as models or idols for the young. Like the collection of garbage in the cities or the cleaning of dung pits on the farm, it was something that had to be done, but it was not "nice" and the less said about it the better. Never, for instance, did I hear, as far as I can recall, a sermon at election time on the citizen's duty to inform himself about the government of his own town or district or to take direct part in such work. As a matter of fact, I believe that any clergyman preaching such a sermon would soon have been accused of mixing politics with religion.

An exception in this regard must be made for the headmaster of the college preparatory school I was fortunate enough to attend. He was genuinely interested in politics and devoted to it a great deal of his time and strength. He even sacrificed, to some extent, his teaching in order to attend a constitutional convention, which accomplished very little of what he had at heart. Though a Republican himself, he bucked the Republican state machine and was one of the first to question the early public utilities legislation in the state; but, whereas he should

have been almost drafted for governor, he never got beyond the State Senate and, later, an honorary place on the innocuous Civil Service Commission. And the townspeople paid him little honor for his truly unselfish efforts. On the contrary, they rather held it against him that he was so "unpractical."

Until this attitude changes materially, there seems very little hope for improving the tone of political activity. American political life, it seems to me, needs more idealists of this type, to offset the "practical" men. In the school itself, a pamphlet reprint of an address by George William Curtis entitled "The Public Duty of Educated Men," a commencement address at Union College, was required reading. It contained the observation that too often the educated voter, who takes no part in preliminary work, is apt to be confronted in the polling booth with a choice between Captain Kidd and Dick Turpin. (I suppose Louis Lepke and Al Capone would be the modern equivalents.)

I should also add that at Harvard College in the final years of the Eliot administration an interest in current political problems was fostered, though not exactly an impulse to take personal part in practical affairs. Some of this interest was due, I suppose, to the personality of Theodore Roosevelt, who was then President. He made politics seem like a very good show indeed. His histrionic ability was infinitely greater than that of his relative and present-day successor. But the interest remained on the whole academic. While some of the members of my class have achieved genuine distinction in various fields

such as literary criticism, the drama, poetry, finance, medicine, etc., few have even attempted to run for public office or apparently influenced political life in other ways.

## IV

I have already mentioned how impressed I was by the free use of personalities in American politics. In Sweden references to a candidate's personal or family life are not in good form, and I believe they are becoming more rare in the United States, too. My early years in Connecticut coincided with part of the Bryan era, and while I missed the excitement of the gold-versus-silver campaign in 1896, I did live through the apogee of Mr. Bryan's career. My first impressions of him were very unfavorable indeed. The only newspapers available in the town were such rock-ribbed Republican organs as the old New York *Tribune*, and, having no background to check against, I became firmly convinced that Mr. Bryan was an incarnation of almost every kind of evil, that he was about as dangerous to the established order as Herr Hitler now seems to be; that he was, in short, an arch enemy of the Republic, a mountebank, a man without conscience or consistency or any kind of honor, a hypocrite and self-seeker to the last degree and probably venal, if the full truth should ever become known. In cartoons and editorials he was ridiculed, pilloried and scorned. I know now that I should have made allowances for party bias, but being young and inexperienced I took those charges at their face value. The Republicans I heard talking about

politics also shuddered at his name. Campaign orators not only ridiculed his program, but questioned his personal and civic motives. He was just a voice and nothing more. An empty head was his best alibi. To be sure he was never accused of being a war maker, otherwise Hitler and Mussolini, rolled into one, would have been a fairly good prototype of the impression I had of Mr. Bryan when I left Connecticut for Cambridge in the fall of 1904.

I now understand that my lack of an earlier American background deprived me of the needed correctives to this image, but when I now hear and read decidedly similar language about Franklin D. Roosevelt, I wonder if somewhere there is some little boy of either foreign or native parentage who takes it as seriously as I did the abuse of Mr. Bryan.

During the World War, when I was stationed in Paris, every passenger ship that came to France brought a new set of sensations about President Wilson's personal life. In a few days they would percolate through the entire American colony, and no doubt the French heard them, too. "I know so and so, and he knows for an absolute fact that only last month," etc., etc. But as soon as the United States declared war these stories stopped and the portrait of the American President became all but saintly and heroic. We all know now that those stories were lies—pure invention—but when you live abroad it is hard to check up on such gossip. Many of the current gags about President Roosevelt are warmed-over jibes from earlier days. I once heard three at a stretch which were revivals from the days of Theodore Roosevelt or Woodrow Wil-

son. They reminded me of the seventeen-year locusts, which lie dormant for so many years and then crawl forth to despoil the countryside.

In regard to Mr. Bryan my enlightenment came about in a rather dramatic way. As an undergraduate at Harvard I joined a club called the Symposium, which met informally in the rooms of various members to entertain prominent men for frank, personal discussions. Even President Eliot honored us with an evening, during which he became so engrossed in recalling former days at Harvard that he stayed long after his usual bedtime. What he said in those few hours, however, made more of an impression on me than many of the college courses which took a whole year.

Then one day Mr. Bryan came to Boston on a lecture tour. Some member of the club knew a friend of his, a "deserving Democrat" named George Fred Williams of Dedham, who later, when Mr. Bryan had become Secretary of State, was appointed Minister to Greece. Through him we were able to extend an invitation to the former and future Presidential candidate. He accepted, but since his evenings were all booked for lectures, he could only meet us for lunch at his hotel in Boston, the old Parker House. There we found a large round table, set in a private dining room with places reserved for every member. Mr. Bryan and Mr. Williams joined the circle and at once the discussion began. It lasted most of the entire afternoon and covered more subjects than were ever listed in the Harvard catalog. We posed what we thought were pertinent searching questions, but Mr. Bryan had

no trouble at all in answering. In fact he downed us all and became easily the lion of the occasion.

Physically I had recognized him readily enough from his photographs, which were then common in all newspapers, if not from his caricatures; but in view of what I thought I knew about his real character I was at first quite skeptical—on my guard, as it were, against the corrupter. No matter how clever or convincing his answers, I just knew they couldn't be true. Wasn't Mr. Bryan a desperate and untrustworthy character? But as the discussion went on I became more and more fascinated by the man, his general charm, his wit and good humor. In short, I decided as we left the hotel that he was the most delightful person I had ever seen, more so than any other political orator or clergyman or professor I had ever heard, including Theodore Roosevelt himself, who had come to Harvard to visit his son and talk to the undergraduates, surrounded by the full Presidential aura.

Then when I recalled how misled I had been about Mr. Bryan my mind was filled with great disgust, and I have been suspicious of personal political propaganda ever since, especially the Republican. My sudden disillusionment recalled a similar one I had suffered in the field of books. In a Swedish translation I had read Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon* when I was still young enough to believe every word was the gospel truth. Then one night, many years later, when I had not thought of Jules Verne for a long time, it suddenly dawned on me that he must have drawn the entire story from his imagination. It was a shock to me, for I had believed so im-

plicitly in those former American Civil War artillery officers and their rocket.

## v

In recent years my work has shifted from both the general run of American news and international affairs, including war in Europe, to the relations between the United States and Sweden, especially in the field of reciprocal news and information. There is so much each can learn from the other. But, though I had always kept touch in a general way with what had happened in Sweden since my childhood, I had missed a great deal, I soon learned, of what had taken place in political education. How did it happen, I had to ask myself, that the common Swedish people, whom I had known as generally poor and often ignorant, had been able to survive one European crisis after another without any apparent political disturbances? How had they been able to provide social welfare measures before larger and wealthier countries had even thought of them? How had they managed to make organized labor feel responsible for the public welfare? Why did a complicated system of liquor control work in Sweden when prohibition failed elsewhere? How had they been able to keep their cost of living constant, avoiding both inflation and deflation? Why did cooperation in its various forms, whether in retail distribution, housing, or manufacture, work better there than elsewhere?

An answer to these questions, which impressed me so



much that I copied it verbatim, I found in the *Boston Evening Transcript* for September 14, 1935. It was written by Roger W. Babson, the Wellesley Hills statistician and economist, and read as follows: "Sweden has learned a great deal of which we in the United States seem to be still ignorant, namely, that for any movement to succeed, education must come first and legislation afterwards. Most important of all is the educational differential. After all is said and done, education per capita is far more important than wealth per capita in judging the safety of foreign investments. The Scandinavians are today probably the most highly educated people in the world."

"How and where educated?" I asked myself. From my own experiences in the district schools of Småland, the province in which I had been born, and in the public schools of Connecticut, which I later attended, I did not get the impression that the Swedish schools were superior, but rather the contrary. About higher education in Sweden I knew nothing personally, but though I had heard it well spoken of, I could not believe it had reached enough of the common people to influence the general run of voters. On the contrary, I had the impression that it was reserved for the wealthy few and was therefore in no sense democratic.

I then discovered something I had missed in the newspapers, namely, that there had grown up in Sweden, while I had been away, a new system of civic or adult education, supplementary to the regular school and college courses—a form of education especially designed for the

average citizen to enable him to use his political rights more intelligently. I also learned that this new system was supported chiefly by several popular movements, which were political only in so far as they judged political action useful for their own ends. In other words, they were not political parties in the American sense, but rather economic or moral reform movements which needed a broad popular base to succeed. The right to vote was one of the weapons available, or rather one of the tools or instruments at hand, and to make proper use of it, as well as many others, the supporters of the movement needed more education. There was also need for specially educated leaders.

In politics the Swedes prefer members of their own class or profession to represent them instead of hiring professionals, who are mostly lawyers using politics merely as stepping stones in their own careers. In Sweden there are very few lawyers, anyway. All law is codified and fairly simple to understand, at least when compared with the common law or case system in the United States, where law making seems to be of lawyers, by lawyers, and for lawyers. In the average American legislature or Congress over one-half of the members are apt to be lawyers and sometimes two-thirds, whereas in Sweden they form only a very small minority. Farmers, labor leaders, newspaper editors and publishers, clergymen, civil officials, army officers, large estate owners, industrialists, etc., form the representative body in Sweden. That neither labor leaders, such as William Green or John L. Lewis, nor elder statesmen or former presidential candi-

dates, such as John W. Davis, James M. Cox, Herbert Hoover, Alfred E. Smith, Alfred M. Landon, nor a business man like Barney Baruch nor a retired general like Hugh Johnson are members of Congress seems to the Swedes not a little strange. As open consultants or critics they would be useful to any administration and to the public as well.

As a child the most active popular movement I had heard of in Sweden was that organized to promote temperance. Gradually it went into politics, and while it has never been able to achieve total prohibition, it has often held a balance of power and its agitation for prohibition underlay, I learned, the workings of the Bratt system of individual liquor rations. As a popular educator it is still active, and it also counts in politics. A certain share, for instance, of the government profits from the Bratt system has to be used for temperance propaganda—as good a system of checks and balances as any.

## VI

As a boy in Sweden I had heard of the Folk High Schools, but I had had no personal contacts with them. Though originated before my time, they have grown in number and influence chiefly during the past generation. Originally founded in Denmark by a patriotic bishop named Grundtvig to provide adult education chiefly for farm youth on a national rather than a classical or academic basis, they had been first adopted in Sweden by certain farm leaders in the late 1860's to train young

men for political careers. A change in the representative system in 1865 had suddenly given the farmers increased political power, and, typically enough, they had decided to train their own sons to represent them in parliament or Riksdag, instead of electing professional politicians or lawyers. For the farm youth short courses are given, chiefly in the winter months, when farm work is slack; while in the summer, girls study domestic science. The principal subjects taught are public speaking, writing Swedish, national literature, practical arithmetic and other mathematics, including surveying; marketing, cattle and poultry raising, and other useful subjects. These schools are coeducational boarding schools, and naturally a certain amount of social life develops, including alumni reunions, continuation courses, etc. Most of the schools are still owned by the provincial legislatures, especially those devoted to the training of farm youth, but others have since been set up by the cooperative movement, the labor unions, certain religious bodies, etc. Altogether there are over fifty in a nation of only a little over six million inhabitants. For the United States a corresponding number would be over one thousand. The fees are rather moderate, since much of the cost is borne either by public bodies or by special organizations.

Early in the present century or after I left Sweden another economic group arose in politics, the organized industrial workers. They, too, soon realized that they needed political representation and power to attain their ends, particularly after losing the general strike of 1909. Then they set to work not exactly to "play" politics, as

the expression goes in the United States, but to work at it for a definite purpose. In order to succeed, they found they needed men who could speak and write good Swedish, who could understand not only the municipal and central governmental system, but also how to organize political clubs or associations, run public meetings, hold debates, argue against and, if possible, down the opposition speakers, and finally how to formulate laws and hold public office. In the strike they had lost more than half of their dues-paying membership, but, nothing daunted, they set about to build up their ranks again and to train them for peaceful political effort. It has been said that every union headquarters became a night school.

But they needed more than that, and, unlike the farmers, they could not send their young men away for the winter season, employment in mills and factories not being seasonal. They had to study at home and learn as they worked. Their new educational method they took, therefore, less from the Folk High Schools of the farmers than from the temperance movement, which had originally been inspired from the United States. To provide social counter-attractions to those of the saloons, the temperance workers had begun early to provide lecture courses as well as concerts with coffee parties and amateur dramatics. Then in 1902 the study leader of the International Order of Good Templars, Professor Oscar Olsson, who is still living and enjoying the friendship of many Americans, started the first study circle at a Good Templar Lodge in Lund, and this form of adult education has had an amazing growth ever since.

What is a study circle? It is a small group of people of almost any age or occupation who agree to study together for a season either a certain subject or a certain author, and then meet regularly for the exchange of information, ideas, comment, opinion, etc., related to that subject or writer. To get public support for the purchase of books, or even a small library, or for the correction of examination papers, a certain amount of organization, including a leader who will act as executive secretary, is needed; but in no case is he supposed to be a teacher or have higher authority as an interpreter of the subject than the other members. This form of self-education closely fitted the needs of the organized industrial workers, especially since they did not live on scattered farms but in more or less compact communities. The movement has since grown apace and has been taken up by the rural youth as well as by the cooperatives and the churches and finally by the white-collar or office workers, whose study-club organization has this year, for the first time, been granted state aid, which means formal recognition of standard work.

It is, of course, impossible to give here many details about this great adult education movement in Sweden to which there is no counterpart in the United States. Suffice it to say that in 1937-38, the last year for which complete statistics are available at the time of writing, the total number of active and formally recognized study circles was 11,900. Multiply that by twenty to get the proper proportion for the United States and you get 238,000. The members of the circles were 141,272, which

would make 2,825,440 in America. The number of books in their libraries was 1,596,194 or 31,923,880 in proportion to population in the United States, while the number of book borrowers was 304,105 or 6,082,100 and the number of books issued 2,150,704 or 43,014,080.

It is perhaps needless to emphasize what effect on political life such an educational system would have in the United States. In Sweden a single little book, which lies before me as I write, entitled *Political Economics for Everybody*, has been sold in over 50,000 copies. That would make more than a million for the United States. Now just think for a moment what would happen to the United States if any textbook on economics could be sold in over a million copies. Wouldn't that make life a little harder for the Huey Longs, the Father Coughlins, the Dr. Townsends, the Upton Sinclairs and other economic medicine men? It would be the best investment the United States could possibly make, an investment in the education of the common people who already have the right to vote, but who often vote blindly.

And what do the study circles study? First of all, there is no set pattern, no standard course which will make you an intelligent voter in six easy lessons. Each group decides for itself what it wants to study. It can then have its leader write to headquarters in Stockholm for advice about books, which to buy and where to get them at the lowest cost, or how to start a little library for future use. The various national organizations show quite a difference in the choice of subjects. In 1937-38 the Workers Educational Alliance, for instance, the largest in the

country, with its 6136 active circles, had 1168 of them choose problems in organization, that is, practical party work, parliamentary rules, etc. Next came 711 which had elected to specialize in English. Then followed political science and problems in local government with 459 clubs, singing and music with 403, and trade unionism with 381. Swedish attracted 312 clubs and Esperanto 237. German was quite far down the list with 113 and French last with 29. The explanation of the popularity of English seems to be partly American moving pictures and partly the practical uses of English in shop work, since directions on imported parts are often printed in that language.

Among the 1656 study circles of the Good Templars, amateur dramatics led with 329, while English and Swedish ran neck-and-neck with respectively 73 and 61 each. Music, literature and singing were far ahead of their standing among the industrial workers, the social aspects of the temperance educational activity being more highly stressed. Among the study clubs of the farm youth, arithmetic led the list of subjects, followed closely by Swedish, which corresponds pretty well to the curricula in the Folk High Schools. Among the public lecture courses, arranged jointly for the various study club associations, the subject most in demand was political science and problems in local government, followed closely by trade unionism and international relations. Here problems of organization came near the end, tending to show that practical political party work is not to be taught by lectures.



For the advanced training of its own youth, the Swedish labor movement has two Folk High Schools of its own, virtually labor colleges. In these the most promising sons of union members are apt to be given scholarships. Thus they may grow into competent legislators or union officials, able to hold their own in the formulation of new laws, as well as in negotiations of labor contracts with industrial leaders.

## VII

Could such a system of adult civic education be organized in the United States? In view of the many conferences and discussions of the problem of education in relation to democracy now going on, I take it that there is no need to argue that some such system is wanted. From the frieze of the Boston Public Library (on the Boylston side), I have copied the following inscription, which sounds as though it had been written by President Eliot of Harvard: "The Commonwealth Requires the Education of the People as a Safeguard of Order and Liberty," and if democracy is to work, the common people must be taught to work at it. Otherwise government is apt to fall more and more into the hands of professional politicians, demagogues, and finally dictators.

My own opinion is that such a system of adult or civic education could be set up in the United States and in much less time than it has taken to grow by experimentation in Sweden. E. R. Bowen, field secretary of the Co-operative League, often says that in cooperation the United States with its greater resources ought to be able

to do in ten years what has taken forty in Sweden. The material resources are here, and there is no lack of able men who understand the need of education and have the technical ability to put such a system into effect. It must be done by propaganda of the right sort, partly by newspaper publicity, and I know the American press would help, because nothing would assure it more permanent readers than better civic education. Radio and the moving pictures would also be useful instruments, and the Swedes lacked both when they started.

Now I know very well that many things in Sweden are far from perfect, too. But that does not make it impossible for the United States to learn something from the experiences of a smaller nation.

Finally, I want to dispose of an objection which I often encounter when Swedish reforms are proposed for the United States. It is the racial question. "But then Sweden is a homogeneous country," is the remark which seems to excuse all inaction. Yes, that is true. Sweden is more homogeneous than the United States, but less so than might be expected. There are many racial strains blended in Sweden, too, as well as in Great Britain, in France, and even Germany. In my opinion this mixture is not a handicap, but a benefit. I could quote chapter and verse as to what Jews, Walloons, Germans, Frenchmen, Italians, Scotchmen, and Americans have contributed not only to the culture of Sweden, but to the racial mixture itself. I know that the pure Nordics predominate, but I also know other strains that could still be absorbed with advantage. These strains the United States already has. All

it needs to do is to make use of them and cultivate the talents of each.

The greatest common bond of a nation is not ethnic but lingual. Now it might have happened that three or four different European languages had been established as the official languages of a certain number of states. Suppose, for instance, French were the official language of Louisiana and of Maine, as it is of Quebec, or Spanish the tongue of both Florida and California, Swedish the state language of Minnesota, Norwegian of South Dakota, German of Pennsylvania, and English of Massachusetts, then I should view the problem of a common civic education with misgivings indeed. But now this problem does not arise. Whatever additional tongues we may have acquired, we all speak or understand English, at least those of us who have attended the public schools. The immigrants are fast dying out, and illiteracy is not such a problem here as in Poland or Yugoslavia, for instance, or as it was in Russia. Belgium, Canada, and Finland, though advanced states, are nevertheless handicapped, as the United States is not, by the lack of a common national language.

For all its supposed advantages in racial homogeneity, Sweden forty years ago, or even thirty, was faced by much greater obstacles in educating its workers than the United States is now. To be sure, illiteracy was all but unknown, even then; but when I think of the common Swedish workingmen, as I knew them as a child, whether employed on the railroads or in the forests or on the farms, and think of their absolute lack of both interest

and understanding of economic and political problems, I get rather angry on hearing the excuse of racial differences brought up in the United States today. Those working men were of the same type as the farm hands who emigrated to the United States, honest, loyal, hard-working boys, but no geniuses, and it is their children who have today built up the most highly organized and probably the best educated set of voters in the world.

The present-day American workers are not backward. They are probably among the most alert in the world. All they need is better education in public affairs. And when I think of the average set of pupils in an average American public school, as I have seen them on many occasions, I would be willing to match them in intelligence and alertness with any corresponding set of children anywhere in the world. It is all a matter of what use you make of this human raw material. I'll cite a single, concrete instance. During the preparations for the celebrations of the New Sweden Tercentenary in the Delaware Valley in 1938, a public school in the southwestern part of New Jersey exchanged drawings by pupils with a corresponding school in Sweden, and while the draftsmanship of the Swedish children was found to be better than that of the Americans, the New Jersey children showed more originality in design. I think this is a typical situation. The American capacity to learn is, I repeat, at least equal to that of any other nation.

I'll close with an old story, which illustrates my point. A school teacher had sent home one of her pupils with

a note to his mother to give him a bath, or at least to have his face washed. Soon he came back with this reply in writing: "Johnny ain't no rose. Don't smell him—larn him."



IX

GIAN GASPARE NAPOLITANO

*Italy*

“An Italian View of America’s  
Crisis”

GIAN GASPARE NAPOLITANO, born in Palermo, 1907, studied in Verona, Milan, Aquila, and the Collegio Militare at Rome. Doctor of Political Sciences, Rome University. After 1924, newspaper work in Rome. After 1930, traveling correspondent for *Gazzetta del Popolo*, Turin, and *Giornale d'Italia*, Rome. Participated in the March on Rome, 1922; war correspondent in the Ethiopian campaign for the *Giornale d'Italia* and Associated Press. Attached to press bureau of Italian Legionnaires corps in Spain and chief of the motion-picture section of Legionnaire Aviation in 1937 and 1938. Special United States correspondent for *Messaggero* since February, 1939.



## IX

### *AN ITALIAN VIEW OF AMERICA'S CRISIS*

By *Gian Gaspare Napolitano*

#### I

AT the very outset I must say that after an absence of five years two aspects of life in the United States impress me deeply: first, the appearance and alarmingly rapid development of a social and economic problem centered on the distribution of wealth within the nation; second, the enormous and quasi-morbid public interest in problems of foreign politics which, at least on the surface, are of no immediate concern to the American people. No doubt many other aspects of American life would be appealing subjects of discussion, but, to my way of thinking, the usual query put to the foreigner, "What do you think of the United States?" may best be answered by giving chief consideration to these two points.

This great country is facing a major turning point in its history. That is certain. Its customs, standards, ideas are undergoing an extraordinary process of transformation, social, literary and political, which is drawing it farther and farther into the life of Europe, South America and Asia.

We witness today rapid transformations. Material distances have been eliminated to such an extent that it is not difficult to attribute the cause of the crisis to the end of an "isolationism" which may be said to be traditionally 150 years old, but which in its new phase dates back to 1919.

I am willing to admit, not only that I, a foreigner, do not know exactly what is going on in the United States of 1939, but that no one, even among Americans, can tell exactly whither this country is heading. On my arrival here in February, 1939, I found a surprising state of political and social unrest. For instance, making my visit to the Italian Consulate on my first day here, I was astonished to see a picket line of "Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade" parading in front of the Palazzo d'Italia and carrying posters with such inscriptions as: "Mussolini and Italy out of Spain," "Stop the Fascist Invasion." And I was further amazed to discover that a photograph of an alleged bombing by Italian legionnaires was the same photograph of a "Red" bombing of Spanish civilians that had been used as anti-Communist propaganda in Italy. But all this "demonstration" took place under the coldly amiable gaze of a few huge policemen, while the well-dressed Fifth Avenue sidewalk throngs quite ignored it.

When I came here in 1931, and again in 1934, the United States was, to all intents and purposes, totally detached from Europe. Newspapers, at least outside of New York, dealt with events abroad in brief dispatches, in impersonal news-agency language, and generally in

the inside pages. It was still a period in which Europe meant only Geneva, and Geneva had been for many years America's love child. Geneva was a typical American product which had been bequeathed to Europe by Woodrow Wilson.

However, America looked upon this illegitimate offspring of hers, which she never adopted, with sympathy, and her maternal conscience seemed at ease as long as the child was being properly fostered by someone else. Geneva, to the United States—and by Geneva I mean the political *status quo* established at Versailles in 1919—meant a world in which the English fleet policed the far-flung routes of American, British, and French trade. Since 1934 the protective and defensive system of Geneva has steadily declined.

In the United States, during this period in which the map of Europe was being remade, significant social changes were taking place. In my opinion, the two problems I have mentioned, the industrial crisis of the United States and the disintegration of the Versailles system which is unfolding itself under our very eyes, are simply two aspects of the same problem, so far as the United States is concerned. They are the basic elements of a crisis. They are the laborious efforts of a world intent upon rounding the Cape Horn of the post-war system. From this point of view, and barring any political and social upheavals that may occur in this country, the United States today is tortured by one dilemma: peace or war. That is to say, the United States will solve its internal problem either by a series of adjustments to the

new equilibrium that has come into existence during the past six years in the outside world; or, in an obstinate and somewhat pathetic attachment to the ideals of Versailles, will attempt to reestablish the alignments of 1919. On these questions depends America's future—and not America's only. Hence I wish to examine them more closely.

It should be made perfectly clear before we go any farther that my viewpoint is that of an Italian of 1939. I mean that my opinions are those of a journalist reared from early youth in the climate of the Fascist Revolution. As a man and as a political writer, I have had the privilege of witnessing the three major events of Italy's post-war history: the March on Rome, the Ethiopian campaign, and the Fascist intervention in the Spanish Civil War. I believe, then, that my ideas, which are shared by at least an entire generation of Italians, deserve the serious consideration of Americans who are interested in international problems and who wish to examine them from every possible angle.

## II

Having made my position clear, I want to go on to say that I have a sincere admiration and a thoroughgoing sympathy for the United States. I have been in the country three times, and have traveled across it in every direction. I passed the frontier the first time from the north at Detroit, Michigan, and the second time from the south at El Paso, Texas. At the end of my first visit, I left from San Diego, California, on the West Coast, returning to

Europe through the Panama Canal; my next point of departure was St. John, New Brunswick, near the extreme northeast corner. Finally, early in 1939, I entered through the Front Door: I landed in New York.

Naturally, I do not travel merely for the sake of traveling. I have never been on a cruise. I travel as a writer and journalist. During the past ten years, in Africa, in Australia, in Oceania, in the two Americas, I have met with people, languages and customs profoundly different from my own. And to understand them I have found no better key than sympathy, almost a solidarity which binds me with all men of the earth, because I share with them this greatest among all adventures: living all together, at the same time. That is what brings me to this country: that feeling of solidarity, besides the relentless, persistent curiosity of a political reporter.

I must say that till now I have never been disillusioned: this is a country that is able to satisfy all men according to their hungers. I remember exactly, with great precision of detail, I might say, the United States of the early thirties. It did not take me long to conquer that feeling of solitude and fear that must weigh upon immigrants when they arrive on these shores. It was a spectacle, to me a fabulous spectacle, of mass civilization, created for the masses, by an intelligent minority of strongly individualistic leaders. It did not take me long, I say, to see in this proud, imposing, machinist exhibition, America's humanity, the innocence and ingenuity of America, the hospitality and generosity of America.

Those were hard times, too, for America, times of

crisis, need and uncertainty; millions of unemployed, their feet in the snow, their collars upturned—on the breadlines. It was then for the first time that I had the premonition that inside those men, something was coming to an end, something that was not only the post-war reaction or deflation. To my eyes those breadlines meant that the United States had completed another cycle of economic, social and political history, a cycle which was founded upon what we have agreed to call “pioneering spirit,” “individual enterprise” or “rugged individualism.”

In 1932 the crisis, in its tragic simplicity, simply meant this: the home and foreign markets of American industry were saturated and therefore the factories had to curtail their production to conform to the age-old law of supply and demand. There is no need to discuss here the causes for the sudden saturation of European, South American and Asiatic markets. The fact remains that in 1932 the United States for the first time was faced with unemployment as a social problem, a problem urgently requiring an immediate solution.

Did not an unemployment problem exist in America even before 1932? No doubt it did, but it was tucked away in the bright folds of general prosperity. It was taken care of by private charity, by the generosity of citizens as individuals. In this the America that was, differed essentially from the concept of totalitarianism. It might be said that each individual in this country considered himself a small independent state. In 1932 all this came to an end. It was brushed aside by a rising senti-

ment of solidarity toward those unfortunate millions, the lost legions of machinism. The people of America lost little time in conferring upon the government the necessary legal authority to cope with the problem of unemployment. But the country did not suspect at that time that it was witnessing the rise of a permanent problem, the problem of potential workers who will never find a job, a class problem, not of this generation, but of generations to come. In short, it was the problem of permanent poverty.

To speak of poverty in America may appear a paradox, especially to non-Americans. But the Americans themselves know exactly to what I refer. This country is not poor; in fact, it is the wealthiest country in the world. Even the most distracted reader of statistics knows that the United States alone possess one half of the entire world's gold. However, the people are poor, profoundly poor, frightfully poor, not because there are no riches to be had but because there is something fundamentally wrong in the distribution of wealth. The country is rich, the people are poor.

Poverty is relative. An Eskimo clothed in patched skins, living in an ice igloo, may be considered prosperous in his community. An American family sheltered in a comfortable government-housing project with no definite outlook except an indefinite subsistence on public funds no matter how generous they may be, is the naked expression of permanent American poverty. According to figures that I have in this country—and without referring to “the one third of the nation” of the presidential phrase

—approximately one fifth of the population of the United States is too poor to buy its own food, its own clothes, or pay its own rent without direct or indirect government subsidies. When I returned in 1934 the relief measures which in 1932 seemed temporary and provisional and strictly humanitarian were already a new aspect of the social system of the United States. May one not, therefore, speak of “permanent poverty” in the United States? In other words, is there a crisis “in the system” or is the crisis “of the system”?

I now come back to find that the numbers of unemployed in 1932 have not decreased substantially in 1939. And this notwithstanding the wide powers and centralized discretionary authority given to a Democratic government and the extraordinary, patient, generous cooperation of the mass of American taxpayers. What is even more significant than the stagnation in the numbers of the unemployed is the stagnation in the class of unemployed. Joblessness does not shift to new classes, allowing previous victims to return to fruitful labor. And each year young men come to maturity and find that, though they have the traditional “right to work,” there are no jobs. There appears to be a class that has been definitely cut away from the congested stream of America’s wealth circulation.

I conclude that the crisis is “of the system.”

What system? I refer to the industrial and economic system that inspired the development of the United States until October, 1929, a system in which a great part of the country still has faith. But from 1929 to 1939 this



system has shown symptoms of disease: 12 million unemployed who, with their dependents, constitute a mass of 25 million individuals to be fed, clothed and housed by the other 30 million gainfully employed, who, in the name of old American ideals, continue a courageous struggle that is becoming harder and more difficult to bear as each day goes on. During this time the vast army of relievers, WPA-ers, CCC-ers, NYA-ers, and the many others who had "individual enterprise" and "pioneering spirit" knocked out of them forever in 1929, and who came to the threshold of manhood and womanhood at a time when these ideals could not be put into profitable practice, are developing a mass, if not a class, conscience which is directing what appeared to be temporary into the grooves of permanency.

Parallel to this there are the forces of labor which are being welded into organizations with membership and political power of hitherto unknown proportions. This is a gigantic, sluggish, inarticulate force that has not yet tasted its power in mass agitation, but has already demonstrated its hostility not only toward private industry but toward public authority. A long succession of labor disputes accompanied by occasional bloodshed, the sharp political clashes over labor policies within the government, and the strange spectacle of the WPA strike are some of the many symptoms that lead a foreign observer to suspect that this country may be on the eve of a serious social upheaval.

But, on the other hand, the traditional economic, industrial and commercial structure of the United States

must be taken into account. This structure, bone and blood of America, is still solid. The big and little magnates of finance, industry and commerce may have lost some of their political prestige but not their material power and influence. Regardless of the chaos in economic life, these men still have a strong voice in public affairs. This is the class of men to whom Americans owe their country's economic world primacy, the spectacular ascent of the United States trade and the splendid equipment for the exploitation of national resources and the processes of industrial production. The position of capital is now being challenged by powerfully organized labor. The workers clamor for a chair at a banquet at which, unfortunately, the viands have already been consumed.

It is a dramatic battle of which we are now witnessing the first movements. Both sides are powerful and conscious of their strength, but neither cares yet to risk a frontal attack. Each is feeling out the opponent's resistance, and each is carefully eyeing every sign of internal dissension within the enemy ranks.

It is all of keen interest to the impartial observer who has seen this same array of forces in his own country. But there, in Italy, the government was able to intervene in time. It succeeded in forming the Corporate State and sits between the rival forces of capital and labor as a permanent arbiter.

In the United States, the government, or rather the Executive, has at his disposal only empirical remedies—purely political strategems—which he may apply to the widespread uneasiness that is among the chief contribut-

ing factors preventing a return to industrial and economic normalcy. At the present moment there is, to the outsider at least, every evidence that a heavy majority of Americans are definitely opposed to—or extremely hesitant about—granting the Executive wider powers than those he already possesses. In the larger organized groups, capital and labor, I believe there is equal reluctance to increase government power because of the fear that such increase might result in a reduction of their own influence or liberty of action. In this fight between men and money, each contender believes he can defeat his adversary single-handed, and each also believes that the government is an unreliable ally.

But against the possibility of open hostilities, we may consider the hope of compromise. The points in dispute involve sweeping reforms: revision of wage scales, redistribution of wealth, control of production, readjustment of living standards. A settlement of questions of such breadth obviously carries with it enormous difficulties.

There is sporadic talk of the possibility that a world conflagration would offer the United States, as a solution of its social problems: a boom in the armament industries, unlimited markets provided by millions of hungry and ill-clad warring Europeans who would avidly buy every grain of wheat, every stitch of clothes the United States could produce, a reabsorption of the unemployed, customers for surplus agricultural products, and so on. But again the realist will say that no matter who may be the conqueror and who the vanquished, your present situation would only repeat itself a short time hence. Is a

simple postponement or a temporary solution, rather than a permanent remedy, worth the risk?

There is reason to believe that, barring the temporary resolution of a war "boom," or a real revolution within the nation, another twenty years may see the vaunted American standard of living reduced to that of the masses of Europe. Or, a more satisfactory development might be the striking of a balance, whereby the standard is raised in the more progressive nations of Europe and the American standard lowered so that the two will reach the same approximate level.

How can the United States retain its old superiority in living standards with the passing of its advantages in the way of undeveloped resources and mass immigration, and with the increasing industrial efficiency of other nations?

However, the possibilities of a future solution of America's social and economic problems may lie in the conciliatory forces that might develop from the deep desire for an economic renaissance. As President Roosevelt put it in one of his speeches, what this country looks forward to is the rosy prospect of "earning \$80,000,000,000 a year." It is not clear, at least at the moment, how America can realize this \$80,000,000,000 earthly paradise. The present international uncertainties, coupled with internal unrest, economic, political and social, are not exactly the atmosphere for the realization of such bright prophecies.

It is time to ask: Was the great prosperity which visited America immediately after the World War a sort of

sentimental and spiritual rather than strictly economic inflation? Was it based upon the fallacy that Europe would require years to recover from the upheaval war had wrought on its economy and that its markets would long feel the deep wounds that had been inflicted on its industries and agriculture; that American industry envisioned wide internal frontiers, moral or geographic and physical, still to be conquered; that it looked upon enormous masses of immigrants, rapidly arriving at the final phases of the long process of Americanization, as a new home market in which it could find expansion?

## III

The United States, which retired from the Versailles Peace Conference with the firm and irrevocable intention of remaining forever aloof from European affairs, has during recent years been following continental events with eyes that have become less and less those of a disinterested spectator. I have closely followed the birth and growth of a war mentality in the United States. It did not develop overnight, but it is a fact that a large portion of the American public long considered the present European conflict a foregone conclusion, and that only a small minority now believes that the United States will be able to stay out of the ring. This war mentality is one of the most important elements in American contemporary history and one that will play an important part in shaping the country's immediate future.

The causes of war psychology in the United States

are so various and so complex that I can harbor no illusions about having fully identified them. The European balance of power, since 1935, has tipped heavily from the center designed in 1919. The Versailles frontiers have suffered revisions here and there. There have been civil wars, colonial wars, and peaceful occupations of territories, and all this has not taken place without bloodshed, hardships, migrations, and hatreds. And all this America has witnessed with taut and nerve-strung attention. The press, the radio, literature and the movies have lent themselves to political polemics, political news dissemination, and political propaganda.

This country was taken by storm by thousands of political refugees—by the victims of catastrophes, wars, revolutions and frontier rectifications—all actors playing a tragic role in the forced, necessary or spontaneous migrations of peoples and races. All this sound and fury, all these wild rumors and months of propaganda, have brought to the United States a frequently much-distorted echo of events that took place thousands of miles away in Europe, in Asia, and in Africa.

And how do the American people react to all these dramatic clashes, to these convulsions of history, to these readjustments of peoples? The American people have seen only the human episode, the sufferings of individuals, those things which affect the destiny of a single personality, or even of several hundred thousand persons. What the American people have failed to see is what these political changes may mean to entire nations, to masses of forty, fifty, or sixty millions. To use your own

American phrase, you can't see the forest because of the trees.

No doubt it has occurred to others before me to characterize your American civilization as "journalistic." By this I mean that the people of the United States, like their newspapers and other periodicals, are primarily interested in news, in the chronicling of the passing moment, rather than in history. Current events are judged at their momentary face value and not in relation to other events that are as much as a quarter of a century old. The entire nation shares with its popular writers a fine taste for the anecdote, for the "scoop," for the secret that somehow leaked out, "the news behind the news," for first- or at most second-hand information, and even for rumors and gossip which, in a field as delicate and perilous as foreign politics, inevitably lead to misjudgment and erroneous historical perspective.

## IV

I said before that I am writing as an Italian, and therefore I cannot help saying a word about American public opinion as regards Italy. Italy has few reasons to be grateful to the American press, to American writers, to the American radio, and to the American movies. In order that my readers may understand and appreciate what I am now going to say, I must add that the general sentiment of the Italian people toward the United States is one of cordial friendship. This feeling has been expressed in repeated and concrete acts, not last or least among

which is Italy's participation in the New York World's Fair and in the Golden Gate Exposition at San Francisco—which, by the way, at the time of this writing, has not been reciprocated in connection with Italy's Universal Exposition to be held at Rome in 1942. And yet Italy has been forced to note, with the deepest regret, in the United States a succession of acts of manifest antagonism and misunderstanding. Many of my American friends have suggested that Italy's close relationship with Berlin and Tokyo may account for that. Regardless of the political exigencies which created the Axis, I invariably answer that no cooling off of America's cordial feelings toward England and France was noticed after these two nations persistently attempted to form a corresponding "triangle" with Bolshevik Russia at its eastern apex.

This line of conduct has been attributed to momentary reactions. The truth is that a systematic continuation or accumulation of unfortunate episodes may create a permanent misunderstanding between two peoples who have no real motives for serious antagonism.

It is with considerable regret that I find myself obliged to write the last preceding sentence. The time is not so far past, when the relations between the United States and Italy were the best in the world. It is sufficient to mention the last touching and spontaneous, even hilarious, demonstration of that cordial friendship—the welcome the people of the United States gave to General Balbo and his Flying Armada at the time of the Chicago Century of Progress Fair. In reality, there is a closer affinity between the Italians and the American people than



some of you may, at the present time, realize. You are in the habit of thinking of Italy as a very old country. And it really is old, rich in history and traditions. But the Italian nation, the Kingdom of Italy, is very young. You must remember that the Kingdom was not proclaimed until 1861, at the very time the United States was resolving on bloody battlefields its own process of unification. Rome did not become the nation's capital until 1870. And it was during the Risorgimento—the period, roughly speaking, from the death of Napoleon until the election of Abraham Lincoln—that Italy accomplished, by political strategy, by popular revolutions and actual pitched battles, her first step toward unity. That is, it was during the time of Italy's Risorgimento that the United States accomplished its great territorial conquests—at the expense of Spain and Mexico.

During this same period, America was a generous land of refuge for Italian political exiles. Garibaldi, the most illustrious of them, between one campaign and another, found a home here in Staten Island. He hung his sword on a nail in the wall and set himself to work at the peaceful occupation of making candles. Later on, the unification of the United States and of Italy accomplished, America experienced that extraordinary period of agricultural and industrial development, the expansion of large-scale transportation, the heyday of big business and high finance, during which millions of immigrants came to these shores. And Italians had the privilege of participating in America's greatest era of material progress. To-day the sons of those same Italians who arrived here

packed in the steerage of the old ships of the *Navigazione Generale Italiani*, the sons, I say, of those honest peasants and artisans who formed the bone and sinew of skilled and unskilled labor in the United States, are American citizens. And, it would seem, they are good citizens and good Americans.

Continuing our historical parallel, we find in the late nineties—the years of the international “gold rush” for colonies—Italy involved in its first—and not entirely happy—adventure in Ethiopia, while the United States was extremely busy in making its acquisitions in the Caribbean and the Pacific from Spain’s decadent colonial empire.

A few years later, while the United States was quarreling with Mexico, and actively pursuing its “manifest destiny” in Panama and around the New World Mediterranean—the Caribbean—Italy was at last achieving her first notable successes in acquiring a Libyan colony and the Dodecanese Islands of the Old World Mediterranean—*Mare Nostrum*.

And we need hardly mention the joint participation of the United States and Italy in the World War. In Italy’s last victory at Vittorio Veneto, an American battalion was cited for gallantry in the bulletin of General Diaz.

Except for the Fiume episode, Italy enjoyed American sympathy and understanding during the post-war years. We will never forget that Americans were the first to recognize the value of Mussolini’s original achievements in the social and economic reconstruction of Italy. At that time Americans did not worry about the theoretical

or ideological clash between Fascism and Democracy. Hence our surprise at America's misunderstanding of Italy's Ethiopian policy. All we were doing was just settling a problem which had been open since 1898—as I have noted. Furthermore—and this is important—Americans do not realize the extent to which their cutting off the tide of immigration from Italy forced the Italian government to action. For the first time, Italy embarked on a policy of building an Italian-speaking Colonial Empire.

Let us hope that America's own severe crisis of recent years will lead to a more sympathetic understanding between the United States and Italy. The United States has been compelled to adopt its own revolutionary "emergency measures." And so, Americans may well be less critical of the "emergency" program found necessary by another country, which, indeed, had been living in a continuous state of "emergency" since the World War.



X

GEORGE KAO

*China*

“Your Country and My People”

GEORGE KAO, born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1912, where his parents were attending the university. Taken to China at the age of three and lived in Shanghai, Nanking and Peiping. Graduated from Yenching University in 1933, returned to America for a year at the School of Journalism, University of Missouri. Now in New York City, associate editor of Trans-Pacific News Service, American correspondent for *The China Press*, writes for *The China Weekly Review* and *The China Critic*, and regular contributor to *The New China Magazine*, *The Yuchoufeng Fortnightly*, and *Hsi Feng*, all of Shanghai.

## X

### *YOUR COUNTRY AND MY PEOPLE*

By *George Kao*

#### I

I HAVE often heard the remark made that one should write about a foreign country either after a brief visit when first impressions are strong, or not until one has established long residence in the land. Maybe that's the reason why so many books have been written on China. But whatever the truth of the statement, it does not apply to the Chinese with regard to his impressions of America. The Chinese writes his best book on America right there in his own country before ever setting foot on these shores, and certainly not after one year, or two years of sojourn in the U.S.A.

By this I might be considered more or less disqualified from giving you Americans a decent piece of my mind—a popular international sport for visiting authors or visitors-turned-authors these days—but I can still recall the blissful days not so long ago when America was my America beautiful and unspoiled, bounded by the treaty ports and the international settlements, and peopled by m-m-m-m. No, I'm not stuck; I was only thinking of the four great classes of Americans who have transplanted

God's country miraculously to the other side of the Pacific. They are called Marines, Missionaries, Merchants, and Movies with all *its* world of lovely people.

What a fascinating and variegated new world they have built among us! We see the marines, now redfaced and stomping like mad in their rickshas, shouting directions in their comic Chinese from their bar to the nearest brothel; now playing a clean, sportsmanlike game of basketball with the local university team. The missionaries, some trying to convert the heathen with forced gifts of the Bible, others heading all enlightened foreigners in their new worship of the Chinese Red Army. The merchants, purveying everything from Studebaker Champions to the cutest little electric toasters to the four hundred million customers. And the movies, from the days of "Way Down East" to the latest Ritz Brothers opus, providing the Chinese with a smart, glamorous, romantic and too-too divine world which they have come to know as America.

Yes, over there we have a very real America, not a political extension of the United States like the Philippine Islands, not by virtue of hemispheric proximity like one of your Good Neighbors of Latin America, and not by relation of blood and tongue, culture and history, as in the case of England and half a dozen of the European countries. We have an America all our own, an America that exists in our mind, in our heart and, best of all, in our imagination. We have an America that is built out of contacts and friendships with individual Americans, founded on the reports and conduct of our American-



returned students, and born of our avid reading and attendance at the cinema.

Perhaps it is difficult to spot any other important country on the globe that is as different from the United States in so many obvious ways as China. Take an average Chinese—I mean the real average of the four hundred million, one who is unpolluted by any sort of Westernization—and plant him in the midst of you Americans. He would record in his journal something of his observations as follows:

The Americans have yellow hair and green eyes. Although some of them have red or brown or even black hair like ourselves, and darker eyes, the yellow-green combination predominates. We, on the other hand, are without exception a nation of black hair and black eyes.

The American men wear short jackets and pants and their women wear long dresses in contrast to the long gown of our men and the short blouse and trousers of our women.

The American language is nothing like ours. They write from left to right across the page, whereas we write vertically from right to left. Funny, the way they open their books from the back cover!

An American meets his friend on the street and they shake hands, but, as they themselves have pointed out, we shake our own hands. (In Chinese, this form of greeting is called "hugging fists.")

The American starts to address you—"Mister Ah-ta Wang!" In Chinese, I am always called "Wang Ah-ta Mister!" The family name comes first.

You hear an American talk about a big dinner he has eaten. "Say, we had everything there," he cries; "everything from soup to nuts." In China it would be the other way around again. At our big feasts we serve the nuts first; the soup is always the last course, along with rice.

And Wang Mr.—pardon my Chinese—Mr. Wang, could go on and name a thousand and one other things of everyday life in which the American way is the opposite of the Chinese, and vice versa. To the average American the remoteness and strangeness of the Chinese are almost proverbial.

In truth, China *is* rather remote from the United States, a matter of seven thousand miles, and, for all practical purposes, different. Therefore, everything considered, the Chinese knack of understanding America is only less strange than the already well-known English cult of not understanding the same nation.

The very receptiveness on the part of my fellow countrymen to American ideas and idiosyncrasies, their willingness to adopt American customs and commodities, has materially simplified the job of the Four M's in setting up a "Little America," so to speak, in "Very Big China." Until recently, when the Japanese started putting their national stamp almost everywhere, one could see the rise of American civilization in most of China's big cities and among the young, modernized, educated and well-to-do classes of her people. American-trained technicians directed by the industrialization of the country and the development of its natural resources; and Columbia-graduated Ph.D.'s taught in the nation's leading univer-

sities. Bridge swept the leisure classes in popularity in place of *mah-jongg*, and dancing and jazz music became the accepted sight and sound of the social scene. Chinese girls followed their American sisters in their progress from bobbed hair to permanent waves, and their "boy friends" were never without a Western-styled suit for their Sunday best. Even the authentic Good-Earth countryside might be seen plastered with Chesterfield posters with the Chinese equivalent of "They Satisfy." And, to introduce a comic-opera note, funeral processions had been observed to strut behind a brass band blaring the tune of "Marching Through Georgia."

## II

It is the Chinese of this world, not our friend Mr. Wang, who eventually get tired of their Platonic love for America and yearn for a look at *Mei Kuo*, the Beautiful Country herself. "Hundred times heard is not as good as once seen," as our saying goes. And sooner or later they manage to save up enough to make the Grand Tour, from Shanghai to Old Gold Mountain (the Chinese name for San Francisco). They used to come as laborers and merchants, seeking a "foreign fortune," but in recent years they come in negligible numbers, due to U.S. immigration restrictions. They sometimes come as regular tourists, American style, to do the country in the same manner as the Dodsworths do Europe. But most often they come as students, hundreds and thousands of them, in their annual pilgrimage to learn more about America

at first-hand. For two generations, the United States has led all other nations of the world in attracting the young intellectuals of China. More of its foreign students come from China than from any other country in the world.

Nine times out of ten, therefore, the Chinese impression of America is that of a post-graduate student heading for one or another of America's seats of higher learning.

After all his years of preliminary training, studying up and orientation, America, when finally met, cannot be altogether new and strange. From the moment his Dollar liner slips into Golden Gate and, in the cold gray morning, the Frisco skyline emerges to hit his eager eyes, there seems to be a vague feeling of familiarity beneath the first thrill of arrival. The formidable Chinatown at Sacramento Street and vicinity certainly does not add much in the way of foreignness and novelty. "Say, haven't we met before, somewhere?" That is what every Chinese visitor feels like exclaiming when he is first introduced to Uncle Sam.

In spite of this, people begin to show you around, for all you know, as if you were fresh from China. "All this must seem very strange to you, doesn't it?" they ask. "Do you have this where you come from?" You mutter to yourself, if you are too polite to disappoint your kind hosts, "Beg pardon, but we do have all this in China," and maybe as an afterthought, "now." China isn't what it used to be. Why, the Sun Co., universal providers, Shanghai, even had an escalator installed two years ago!

But after a while this little pride in your own Americanized China subsides, and you open your eyes and be-

gin to notice a few things. Of course, the Chinese never have been so misled as to believe Chicago a city of gangsters; and so let-downs and disillusionments when they do come are generally of a less disturbing nature. It does not take long to become reconciled to an America without some of the characteristic "American" touches that we knew so well back home. And it seems rather understandable, now that we are here, that America is not a land of Robert Taylors and Ginger Rogerses; that Hollywood is as fabulous and remote to the rest of the nation as to China; that the good things of American manufacture are universally available—at a price; and that, for the purposes of home consumption, marines and missionaries both might well not have existed.

Once this process of unlearning America gets under way it goes on to showing us hitherto unknown and unsuspected facets of the American people. The Chinese have always recognized the United States as the world's leading exponent of the so-called material civilization, in contrast with our "spiritual" civilization of the East. Our picture of America is a nation of automobiles and skyscrapers, and automobiles and skyscrapers are a sign of great wealth to us. Every car in China, even a five-year-old Ford, is equipped with a chauffeur or two. On his first ride in America, therefore, the newly arrived Chinese is apt to embarrass himself by looking for the chauffeur when his host smiles and reminds him that over here they all drive their own cars. Oh, of course, you say, I almost forgot! As you stay on, you learn a whole lot more about this American institution, the automobile—the farmer and

his family driving to town on Saturday nights; the inhabitants of the trailer, and how well they get to know their country; young men and women making love in the parked car; the speeding and drunken driving, and the sudden death. This, then, is the spiritual side of the American machine.

As to skyscrapers, you must see the Empire State Building. What would the folks at home think if you came back from the States without having been on top of the world's tallest building? But actually as you are approaching the landmark you don't have the feeling which you thought you'd have. The 102-story building seems only slightly taller than some of the other Manhattan structures and, as such, does not impress you half as much as the 23-story Park Hotel which, you can still remember, lords it over them all in Shanghai. The thrill of gazing at a skyscraper would be much greater if you should see a man poised on the ledge outside the thirtieth-floor window while milling and gaping humanity waits with tense expectancy on the street below. . . . And so it goes, the machine that releases man's energy, the skyscraper that vibrates man's heart. From where we are in China it is the material world that looms as America; near at hand it is always the human factor that strikes you first and is the more intriguing.

### III

I remember the time I met my first Negro, a Red Cap at the Oakland ferry, and how for a moment it struck

me as very odd that he should direct me to my train in good English. On second thought, I had to laugh at myself. How silly of me! What else would you expect an American Negro to speak but English? For all our knowledge of the racial make-up of the American nation, the typical American of our mind and even of our acquaintance in China, has always been the Yankee. We were never quite conscious of the existence of Negro Americans, Jewish Americans, German Americans, Italian Americans, Irish Americans, and a host of others, until we came and saw for ourselves. It somehow spoils our illusion of the Americans as one "unified" people, although at the same time it adds to our heretofore academic respect for a government that gives all men equal rights before the law.

For American Democracy is well known and admired among us in China; our "returned students" never fail to spell it with a capital *D*, and we like to believe our country, in a very modest way, a sister Democracy. But, at close range, only on election days perhaps does the Chinese visitor experience a momentary renewal of faith in the way the great and original democracy works, and the many wonders of government, even revolutions, which it may perform without disorder and bloodshed. Everyday life in America is full of evidences of inequality among its people. The Jim Crow laws, the undercurrent of anti-Semitism, and the discrimination against various other racial groups; the hatred and bitterness which the rich and the poor, capital and labor, have for each other; the class distinction between snobbish society and the

common people, are some of the things which not only we don't have but which we never expected to find in America. For instance, in spite of the Chinese reverence for the ancestral family and the fact that our Imperial days were ended only less than three decades back, we have no one class of people known and accepted as "nobility" or "society" or "the four hundred," and such things as "social registers," "blue books" and "debutantes' coming-out parties" would not be countenanced in China, much less accorded the publicity and public admiration they receive in America. And the visiting Chinese realizes that the best of political democracy does not do away with that certain nastiness in men that makes for social and economic injustices.

Thus gradually we revise our picture of America, and if we now have occasion for minor disappointments it is only because our prejudices were mostly in favor of, and not against, your country. From childhood up, we have been told not to smack our lips while eating, not to talk too loudly, not to spit on the ground; also to stand in line, to give up our seat to a lady in the street car, to be orderly and clean, and generally to be public-spirited. These are all good American habits, we understand. Yet, I have never seen people refrain from spitting in the streets in America, and once I actually saw a man obeying a call of nature at the corner of Broadway and 115th Street, luckily for him, with no police in sight. The "ladies-first" rule certainly is not observed in the New York subway; and by and large Americans are no less noisome, pushy and inconsiderate in public places than



any other people, and their table manners are not much to boast of. The slum districts of an American city are no cleaner than those in China, only at home I never remember seeing a picture of the Bowery; all the photographs we had of America being those of Radio City and other beautiful places.

To come back to the American people: their reputation as rugged individualists has also spread as far as China. It's hard for us to conceive the Americans as having any sense of family love and filial piety as we understand the terms. Actually, of all that I have observed of your ways, nothing has touched me more deeply than the love and happiness, the mutual consideration and the spirit of sacrifice which one finds in the average American family. When I lived in the dormitory of Columbia University I often wondered why some of the students took the trouble to send their laundry home by parcel post every two or three weeks. I got the explanation when I saw a friend of mine one day receive joyously his regular laundry bag from "the folks" 'way out in Iowa. Inside the tiny suitcase there was, tucked away snugly between fresh linen, a box of home-made cookies, with two or three apples, an envelope containing some snapshots and all the love a mother can have for a wandering son. Another time I was invited to spend the Thanksgiving holidays with a friend in a small Illinois village. For the following few days I not only found myself a part of a Thomas Benton painting, but also an appreciative witness to a heart-warming scene of typical old-fashioned "Chinese" family reunion, complete from Grandpa and

Grandma to all the married sons and daughters and their families, other assorted relatives, and a pair of twins.

Another time-honored opinion about the Americans which we have to revise before long is with regard to what they think of the Chinese. From American movies and from popular magazine fiction, we have long since come to the conclusion that the average American knows next to nothing about China, and, what is worse, is steeped in false notions and disparaging ideas about the Chinese. We are convinced that all an American knows of us does not go beyond the hatchet man and the tong wars, the gambling and opium dens, and other unsavory aspects of Chinatown. We have become so allergic to the Fu Manchu type that for years any Hollywood picture that had anything remotely concerned with the Chinese ran the risk of being censored or barred in China. All this is, of course, a natural reaction, though slightly exaggerated in proportion to the original wrong, and painful because we feel that we have always understood America or given her the benefit of our doubts.

A Chinese who comes these days to America on guard against any slur, real or imagined, would therefore be happily surprised to find that a large section of the public is really well informed about the Chinese people and kindly disposed toward them. "A Chinaman's word is his bond," I have often heard told, followed by an illustrative anecdote of the person's own experience in dealing with members of the Chinese race. In the papers you read with gratification stories of the industrious Chinese laundrymen during depression, and how no per-

sons of Chinese nationality were ever found on the bread line or on government relief. When I had occasion to lecture before American audiences I was constantly surprised by the general level of intelligence concerning things Chinese. There would always be one or two Chinese "experts" in every audience to startle me with penetrating questions, so that I could not afford to slip up on my facts. The American press is unusually complete in its reportage of Chinese news, especially in these days of war. Aside from the all-but-unanimous sympathy that I have acknowledged on behalf of my country, there seems to be manifested a common bond and a deeper sense of community of interest between the two peoples. Time and again I have come across a left-wing friend who still harbors a grudge against Chiang Kai-shek for his "betrayal" of 1927, or a religious friend who inquires concernedly if China is not going "completely Communist."

I could keep on with this inventory of things seen and heard in America and how they check up with our preconceived notions; only, from the very beginning the business of "taking in" a foreign country has not been so simple. Any European could walk down Main Street and mingle with the natives without attracting attention on sight, but not a Chinese. Even while you stop and stare at a store window, there would be three or four pairs of eyes staring at you. A Chinese visitor is here to observe, and be observed. I realized this shortly after I first landed, and through the good offices of a little brother whom I had left at home. In his letter to me

Dee-Dee had occasion to inquire if the people that I saw when I walked on the streets in America were all "foreigners." "When I go out for a walk here in this little town in the American Middle West," I had written him in reply, "I usually see only one foreigner, and that, my dear brother, is I."

Although this country has a multitude of laws regulating its aliens, I am not aware of one on the subject of un-American attire. Just the same, the Chinese male who visits America invariably conforms to the rigid pattern of a western-styled suit, most of us having adopted it for years before coming by way of practice. As a matter of fact, the Chinese national garb of loose-fitting long gown and pajama-like underwear is much more comfortable and dignified, and, if you Americans had but known about it, there wouldn't have been all the hulla-baloo over the so-called "slack" suit and whether "men can take it." Our own students, years after they have returned from America, when they are well along in their careers and can afford to relax, always revert to the long gown and live happily ever after. But during their sojourn in America they go so far as to discard their elaborately chosen Hong Kong wardrobe for a snappy Stetson hat and a two-pants suit (a thing unheard of in China) to avoid being more conspicuous than necessary.

## IV

This story was told of Wu Ting-fang, perhaps the greatest of China's envoys to the United States, who

served in the Imperial days. Once he was traveling by train, and seated opposite him were two ladies. Dr. Wu must have been in his mandarin robe, for the two women eyed him a long time and then went into a more or less inconclusive huddle. Finally, one of them spoke and addressed the foreigner. "Pardon me, but would you mind settling this argument between us; are you a man or a lady?" Wu stood up and bowed in all his ambassadorial dignity. "Madame," he announced, "I am a ladies' man."

It must have been trying for my countrymen to visit America in those early days before we had the sense properly to "break in" at home on some American customs. A great uncle of mine who had toured the New World in his time used to relate how street urchins would pull at his queue and chant after him, "Chink, Chink, Chinaman!" So we children early acquired a special aversion for the word "Chinaman," which turned into contempt when we learned from our teachers that it is not really good English. Since then, every time I come across the word in print or hear it used in conversation, I almost unconsciously stiffen within me and lose some of my regard for the particular book I am reading or the person to whom I am talking.

We feel the same way about "Charley" and boil with resentment when hailed by that name by a casual American who means no harm. It would be useless to explain why we read into this good Christian name a personal affront and national insult; we just do. All of us feel much better when we are told that a fast-thinking Chinese, once when accosted by strangers with the facetious

question "What kind of an 'ese' are you—Chinese, Japanese or Siamese?" countered, "What kind of a 'keys' are you, Monkeys, Donkeys or Yankees?"

Seriously speaking, Chinese in America are very often mistaken for Japanese, who are perhaps the last people on earth we wish to be identified with at the present moment. Our own explanation of this, based on experience, is that the average American has an idea that the better-dressed, neater-looking Oriental must be a Japanese, which of course does not add to our pride. When the apologetic American confesses inability to tell the two peoples apart, we usually go into a series of explanations such as that Japanese are generally shorter in stature, of stockier build, and are more often flat-footed and bow-legged on account of the stilted wooden slippers they wear. To tell the truth, it is not always that we can recognize each other ourselves. To play safe and avoid embarrassment, a good rule is to ask for the party's name at the beginning. Chinese surnames are practically all monosyllabic, like Chang and Lee, while if the name is long, like Yamasaki, you can be sure he is a son of the Rising Sun.

But these are minor matters, and the Chinese in America constantly surprises his friends with the ease with which he adapts himself. The Chinese sense of humor is often remarkably at one with the American brand, perhaps because both find in human frailties their best source of laughter. I am sure the comedy "You Can't Take It With You" would be as great a hit with a Chinese audience as it was on Broadway, although for some rea-

son it failed dismally in London. We have the same saying over there, in fact, only more explicit—"You can't take it with you into your coffin!"

A common source of wonder is how in the world a China-boy can pick up English so fast and speak it so well after only three months in the country. "Darn clever, these Chinese," you would say. The China-boy in question, secretly laughing at how dumb these Yankees can be, has to come out with the truth that he has been at it ever since First Year Primary School—ten or fifteen years ago—with just such a contingency in view.

That, however, does not explain why there is a belief among Americans who have known Chinese students that these students "speak a more correct English than we do." They are probably being polite or just flattering; otherwise, they have chanced upon a few exceptionally talented young men who are destined to be future diplomats of China. Actually the linguistic abilities of the Chinese are not phenomenal, and they speak the English language well only after a good foundation plus long years of study and constant use. Compared with Europeans, the Chinese as a rule excel in English pronunciation but are understandably behind in vocabulary and grammar, especially in idiomatic usage of the tongue. Not long ago a Chinese student at Michigan made news when he was quoted as saying at a reception, upon being handed a cup of tea: "Thank you, sir or madam, as the case may be."

I have been told of the Chinese Freshman who was asked how he was coming along and answered, "By bus."

There is also the story about the lad at his first American dinner party when a salad was served. "Do you like cucumbers?" inquired the hostess of him. "Oh, yes, I love them," came the earnest reply. "Only in China we have much bigger and better concubines."

In spite of the language handicap, Chinese have the reputation of being "good students" on American campuses—that's what they are here for anyway. In classes they conduct themselves with less intellectual ostentation than their American mates, which may mean either that they practise the Taoist theory of "the wisest man acts dumb" or that they are simply hiding behind their Oriental inscrutability the fact that they are not up on the day's assignment. In any case, the professor, if he knows his Chinese mentality, will refrain from calling on them to save them the embarrassment of betraying their poor English, their diffidence, or their ignorance. If the prof's confidence is not misplaced he is likely to look at one of his Chinese students' papers one day and find a pleasant surprise.

## v

What is the most precious thing which America has for the Chinese to take home? Strange to say, it is not some product of material civilization to be had for money, like the latest model car, but something in the realm of ideas that can be conveniently crystallized in so many letters of the alphabet. It is the various academic degrees that the visiting students set themselves after—M.A., M.S.,



M.B.S., B.C.S., D.C.S., J.D., J.S.D., B.J., M.D., C.E., E.E., Ph.D., and so on, *ad nauseam*. In their "bull session" this constitutes the most-discussed topic: Which one of the assorted degrees requires the shortest time and the least effort and brains to attain? Almost no Chinese student today, if he is doing post-graduate work in the United States, would have the "face" to return with anything less than a master's degree, and in justice to some of the accommodating American universities it must be mentioned how easily this can be secured (the record time is, I believe, nine months, including traveling round-trips). But the most alluring to all and accessible to but a few is the magic and omnipotent Ph.D., the crowning glory of the returned student.

Another object, no less fascinating but perhaps even more elusive, which the Chinese student in America sets his heart upon is known, in a *jeu de mots*, as the LL.D.—not the honorary degree that universities confer, mind you, but LL.D. meaning "Landlady's Daughter," in whom is personified his idea of a bit of exotic romance during a period of hard work and self-exile.

Where he used to admire in Shanghai cinemas the shadows of American pulchritude and Hollywood love-making, now he finds himself in their country of origin. And even the most serious of scholars bent on advancement of his knowledge for the salvation of China will not be able to resist the winning charms of the blondes and the redheads who sit with him daily in his classes.

One remembers the episode in Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*, in which he tells of the love be-

tween Herr Sung and Fräulein Cäcilie in a German pension, and of the amorous effrontery of the Chinaman. Strangely enough, although many a European-returned Chinese student comes home with a German or Parisian wife on his arm, examples of inter-racial marriages among Chinese students in America are rare and likely to be unsuccessful. What they get in the way of romance is still no more than vicarious experience, as from a Garbo film.

As a matter of fact, Chinese society frowns as much on mixed marriages, and rather than brave possible parental disapproval of bringing home an American wife, the Chinese students in most cases crave nothing more than intellectual and social companionship with American girls such as they not uncommonly achieve with American boys. They find young womanhood in this country delightfully different from the type they knew at home. They have an eye for the standard American feminine beauty which in China would be regarded as athletic. They like the frankness with which American co-eds enjoy a "date." But when it comes to marriage with an American girl, you can depend on them to follow Confucius' advice and "think thrice." In one of Pearl Buck's novels there is pictured a moonlight scene between a serious young Chinese patriot and his American professor's daughter. The scene comes to nothing, of course, even though Mary is quite yielding; and the boy soon goes home. Nowadays, the Chinese student still goes home; but he would also like to know Mary before he returns, perhaps to add a romantic touch to this all-too-

transient period of his life. He is, however, seldom given a chance, and never bold enough or otherwise properly equipped to assert himself in mixed company in true American fashion.

This explains why landladies' daughters, waitresses, five-and-ten salesgirls and other easily contacted types of American femininity become the center of interest to some Chinese students who perhaps have vowed that they would know everything of America, from the Harvard case system to women. Others, no doubt the majority, more sedate of mien but no less burning of heart, content themselves with lesser adventures. Their favorite indoor sport is to discuss the relative merits of Oriental and Occidental beauty. They visit the big cities and ask to be initiated into the night club and the burlesque theater. Thus they manage to avoid an altogether ascetic life before they return.

## VI

Outside of the lack of excitement in his life, the one great complaint that the Chinese student has to make during his days in the New World is against his meals. While America may excel in other things, the stay-abroad student realizes that you have to look to the Chinese when it comes to the art of cooking. He finds that rushing off lunch in such American institutions as the drugstore, the cafeteria, and the automat is not such fun as it sounds, especially when you have to put up with things like mashed potatoes, spinach and pumpkin pie. In spite of

Popeye and all his good influence, it seems that spinach is the most maligned food on the American table. In China we consider it a palatable and versatile vegetable, fit for a king—if it is properly cooked. Legend has it that an Emperor of the Sui Dynasty (A. D. 589–617) once sailed down the Grand Canal on a tour of the country and surprised a sleepy hamlet with a dinner call. The local chef did his best with the limited resources available, and one of his offerings was so successful that he was summoned by imperial command to give the name of his dish. “Green-feathered parrot with sparrow’s eggs,” the man lied beautifully, and received a big reward for the rare delicacy. What His Majesty had was, of course, just plain spinach cooked with bean-curd, a most humble dish of the common people.

Most of you who like Chinese food have probably been told that “chop suey” and “chow mein” are typical American concoctions. There is, in fact, nothing Chinese about them except their name, which in China denotes something totally different. “Chop suey,” literally “odds and ends,” is commonly used in our menus to mean giblets; while “chow mein” is the well-known Chinese fried noodles, perhaps a remote ancestor of the spaghetti. In any case, it is a blessing to the visiting Chinese that so many of his countrymen go into the restaurant business in America. If he is in a big city he can always get around to Chinatown on week-ends and frequent one of the neighborhood “chop-suey” houses if he gets homesick for a bowl of rice. In a little place near Columbia University, not inappropriately called “The New China

Restaurant," more future leaders of New China swarm at the dinner hour—so it has been estimated—than can be assembled at any time for a Chinese student meeting.

On the other hand, Chinese students of the small town pride themselves on their chances of "mixing" with real Americans. Strange as it may seem, there are always each year a few sons and daughters of Han who live in self-exile at Northfield, Minn., or in the Ozarks region of Missouri and Arkansas, just to attend some specifically American college. They are, at least when they first arrive, very conscientious about their mission as the so-called unofficial goodwill ambassadors between the two peoples. They live with American families, see something of their farm life, and make speeches about China in Sunday schools or before the Rotary Club. They try earnestly to cultivate an international friendship with a college chum who fires innumerable silly questions at them, sometimes out of curiosity, sometimes even patronizingly. In a few months, when the novelty wears off, they suddenly find themselves lonelier than ever and turn with redoubled energy to their textbooks.

Speech-making is one of the things that Americans like to have their visitors do. Here again there has been a popular notion among friends of the Chinese students that every one of them is a gifted extemporaneous speaker capable of delivering an address in a foreign language on any and all angles of their country at a moment's notice. This is largely due to the fact that the majority of the Chinese students who are not adept at public speaking have the good sense to keep quiet, leaving some of their

prize elocutionists to uphold the good name. One of the latter no doubt was Dr. V. K. Wellington Koo (Columbia '08) who has long since charmed the chancelleries of Europe with his eloquence and diction. Anecdotes of young Koo abound on Morningside Heights, one of which is so often repeated in Sino-American friendship circles that I have at least ten different versions of it. Anyway, the legend has to do with an important banquet to which Koo was invited. The gentleman who sat next to him, in an effort to befriend the "little Chinese," asked him in the midst of their soup, "Likee soupee?" Koo nodded blandly and remained silent for the rest of the dinner until the toastmaster introduced in glowing terms the speaker of the evening. Thereupon Koo coolly got up and delivered his piece in flawless English—after which he resumed his seat and asked his neighbor good-naturedly, "Likee speechee?"

There is nothing that Americans enjoy more than a good show. This is what makes them so enthusiastic about attending a lecture by one of foreign nationality, as I have discovered. What they are interested in finding out is not so much what you have to tell about your own country as what and how much you know about America, and then, not so much that as what kind of person you turn out to be. If the visitor has a nice smile, a pleasing personality, and can crack a few jokes about the Americans in their own language, in slang, he will "go over big" and his applause will be loud and long. In America, verily, nothing succeeds like success. I have never heard such fulsome praise or prolonged applause

as that which is lavished here on transatlantic fliers, right way or wrong, on Major Bowes' amateurs, and on a speaker who is able to deliver grandiloquent nothings in the grand manner.

The Chinese would appreciate more "a gift of coal in the snow" (a friend in need) than "flowers on top of embroidery" (gilding the lily). But here I am back with our proverbs again. While I am at it I may as well point out that one of your best-known Chinese proverbs—"A picture is worth ten thousand words"—is not Chinese. I have looked all over for its original text and have yet to find it. It is enough, perhaps, that Americans regard it as a Chinese proverb.

Indeed, it's not what you are, it's what people think you are. The joy of visiting America would be nothing, were it not for the fact that only by being here are we able to compare the real America to what we think is America, and at the same time realize what you Americans think China is. I have asked youths fresh from China on the West Coast what part of America they wish to see most. "Hollywood," they invariably answer. But if I should meet them again in New York and ask what is it about America that they have liked best, some of them would say, "The prospect of going home by way of Europe!" We have the same feeling about our country that the returned American tourist has about his. All of us have learned to say: "After having been half way round the world, China isn't so bad after all."

Once back in their own country, however, the American-returned Chinese join the ranks of the Four M's as

unwitting but effective propagandists for the American way. Some of the overzealous invite criticism even from the already American-minded stay-at-homes.

A favorite theme in popular Chinese literature deals with the antics of the bespectacled, foreign-dressed and English-speaking returned student, who is the subject of merciless satire—by writers who have never been abroad. A classic tale of this school relates the downfall of one inflated student who had come back and boasted of America just once too often. It was on the night of the Mid-Autumn Festival and the family was enjoying a good old-fashioned reunion feast under the full moon. The prodigal son sat through an uncomfortable dinner complaining of this and that and recalling for the benefit of everyone present the wonderful things “when I was in Ah-mei-li-ka.” Finally, so the story goes, he looked up at the sky and sighed: “Ah, even the moon shines brighter in America!” At this the long-suffering father could stand it no more and smacked his son soundly on the face twice. Smarting under the blow, our unhappy hero came back and had his final say. “Surely American fathers are better than ours,” he lamented; “they never beat their own sons!”

But most of us have learned to avoid such pitfalls by endeavoring to report a more “human” America. We find this no less interesting and revealing to our people than if we were to describe the latest progress in television. If America is different from China in all other respects, at least it is like us in size. America is very big. And if



we find it difficult now to write our best book on America, we can perhaps just jot down a few things about you Americans. We do it, if not with charity to all, with malice, let's hope, toward none.



XI

EMIL LENGYEL

*Hungary*

“America from the Lecture  
Platform”

EMIL LENGYEL, born in Budapest, Hungary, 1895, studied in Budapest; LL.D., Royal Hungarian University 1918. Came to America in 1921, naturalized in 1927. Served in Austro-Hungarian Army during World War. Journalistic experience in Budapest and Vienna, correspondent of various European newspapers including *Pesti Naplo*, Budapest. Author, translator, writer, and lecturer on European subjects.

## XI

### *AMERICA FROM THE LECTURE PLATFORM*

By *Emil Lengyel*

#### I

LECTURES are mirrors of American life. The American likes to do his thinking collectively. He is gregarious by tradition. The United States could not have become what it is if it had not been for the collective action of millions. A nation thus schooled generates its best thoughts in groups.

Lectures, then, play a more important part in American than in European life. In this country they are a part of the system of adult education, a social institution. Thousands of lecture clubs, forums and discussion groups, luncheon, dinner, and supper organizations, men's and women's clubs present tens of thousands of lecture programs to millions of eager members. They listen to experts on domestic and foreign affairs, to critics of the national Administration, eulogists of the President, lecturers on adventures in science and in the jungles. They sit at the feet of the latest celebrity: a columnist of the year, the author of the month, a retailer of backstage secrets, an ex-diplomat, the popular major general of the season, and above all, the foreign celebrity fresh from his tri-

umphs in New York's cocktail belt. The titled lady lets it be discreetly understood that she was a close friend of the late Czarina of all the Russias. The Hungarian Count hints that he is not averse to matrimonial entanglements. The ex-diplomat suggests subtly that his story would set fire to the world if his lips were not sealed. The movie, the radio and the modern high-pressure press have not displaced the lecture platform.

America's lecture habit has a deeper significance. The average American is interested in personalities, who cannot be replaced by the printed word or the canned voice of the broadcaster. The lecturer is an interesting person, probably a celebrity. He can be heard and seen, almost touched. He answers questions, smiles, and behaves almost like a normal human being. Often he possesses that highly treasured something known as "first-hand information." He is an expert, or at least has the reputation of being one. To the small town he brings the color and romance of the wide world. To the big town he brings the sophistication of foreign countries. In a word, he is different.

The average American is a born traveler and adventurer—it is a pioneer heritage. He may never have left his state or county, yet he is urged onward to broaden his horizon. The lecturer provides him with tales of travel or adventure. The American has been brought up in the belief that knowledge is wealth. The lecturer provides him with a short-cut to knowledge. He digests the literature of a vast field for him, condenses the result of years of work into an hour.

The average American is tremendously interested in the world around him. A dozen lifetimes would not be enough to impart to him all the information he would like to have. What about all the puzzling problems of the foreign field? The question of war and peace fascinates his attention. Psychology makes rapid strides, and he wants to keep abreast of the times. Hygiene is forging fast ahead, revolutionizing the life of man. Electrons are in the headlines; a new vitamin has been discovered in red pepper.

Democracy is challenged and dictators claim to have discovered the stone of wisdom. More and more people are beginning to realize the diabolical fascination dictatorships have on ignorance. Thinking is harder than any other work; strong men offer themselves to do all your thinking, and merely demand your soul as their fee. People are beginning to realize that the shortest route to save democracy is the most arduous one. The only panaceas are intense study and self-help. Forum discussions have come into great vogue throughout the United States.

Young America goes to college and middle-aged America wants to keep step with the younger generation. Adult education is the answer, and the lecture hall is painless. The lecturer has been trained to cultivate his "stage presence." He wraps knowledge into glamour and spices it with anecdotes. Sometimes they are stale, but they give laughter a chance to shake off that horrible feeling of drowsiness. If you cannot laugh with the lecturer you can laugh at him. Or you can laugh at your neighbor for his appreciation of a joke so old.

Many jokes—mostly poor ones—are cracked in Europe at the expense of America's lecture habits. The latest and worst is about the doting mother of the promising British youngster whose first novel has just been accepted for publication in the United States.

"How marvelous, darling!" she exclaims. "Now at least you can visit America on a lecture tour."

Before coming to the United States I was one of the few in Hungary who were passionately fond of attending lectures. Too young to obtain admission to an important series, I got an older friend to give me his season card. I learned all about philosophy, psychoanalysis and the disposal of garbage. But the audience was very small. There were well-attended lectures, too, but they were mostly of what I liked to call the "lion-cage" type. The lion was placed on a high pedestal, a thousand miles above the heads of his listeners. He was probably a Nobel Prize winner—an internationally known man of letters. He wore an impeccable dress suit and spoke some foreign language. If it was French, the audience appreciated him twice as much. The laughter he evoked usually trailed into space and time. One had to watch very closely those who understood him, and it took some time for all to pick up the cue. He usually read a chapter of his latest novel or a poem. None enjoyed the cadences of his smooth sentences more than he. Many people thought of lectures as something very long and dull.

But in many towns and small cities in the United States the lecture series provides a setting for social events comparable in importance to the opera in New York and the



symphony orchestras in other large cities. For months the driving power behind the series—usually a group of public-minded citizens—stimulates interest in the coming attractions. They have “bought” talent from the lecture agent. They have seen to it that the program is well balanced. They have a lecturer on travels in the jungles, another on cooperatives, a third on America’s social security system, and a fourth on foreign affairs. Experts in a variety of other fields cover subjects of general interest to a large group of people ranging from the lower to the highest income groups. The organizers of the series advertise their speakers, so that by the time they arrive in town every child is familiar with their faces and records.

At last, the day of the lecture arrives. The leaves are turning brown and they will have dropped to the ground by the time the season reaches its climax. The “socialites” of the town are duly recorded in the local newspaper. For an hour the lecturer holds his audience spellbound. In no other country can one find a group of people so intent upon every word the lecturer utters. They take the human word seriously, and could scarcely pay more attention to a world-shaking statement of a fashionable dictator of the age. Members of the audience take notes, mental and otherwise. The lecture may serve as a basis for discussion in the local high school. For days to come it may gap the awkward silence which usually follows discussion about the weather. The paper reports the speech in great detail and, what is more amazing, with remarkable accuracy.

Who are the favorites of the American lecture-goers?

Winston Churchill and H. G. Wells headed the list for years, not merely because they speak English with a British accent but because of their fame and the substance of their talks.

The lecture public has becoming exacting. It wants not merely to see but also to learn. When the Nobel Prize winner and author, Maurice Maeterlinck, began his set speech in Carnegie Hall, New York, some years ago, a large part of the audience precipitately left the seats and clamored for its money. The famous author's English was incomprehensible. Several possessors of great names have learned to their grief that reputation does not suffice to bring down the curtain with thunderous applause.

The late William Jennings Bryan, perennial Presidential candidate, peace apostle and anti-evolution champion, performed the prodigious feat of holding the breathless interest of his audience for two full hours. He was the typical old-fashioned orator, employing flowery language with bursts of vociferous eloquence. The audiences of today no longer favor the over-dramatic lecturer. They are attracted by worth-while thoughts and "personality."

American audiences prefer men to women. Deep baritone sounds better than high soprano, and the predominantly female lecture-goers are more impressed by men than women. Lady lecturers have to overcome strong prejudices. When a minister in Malden, Mass., was asked to announce in his church that Anna Dickinson would lecture in the Town Hall later in the week, he did so in these words: "I am requested to announce that a hen

will endeavor to crow like a cock at the Town Hall next Wednesday night. Those who will be interested in such an exhibition will, of course, attend."

Not long ago foreign lecturers thought they had done their duty by memorizing the latest jokes of *Punch*. Sometimes the anecdotes were not the latest, but a polite audience gave its tribute of laughter just the same. I still remember the first joke I heard from such a lecturer: "'What are bacteria?' the professor asked the student. 'The rear entrance of a cafeteria,' the student answered." The talk was about some plan to save the world. The audience had a good laugh, and the lecturer felt he had earned his fee.

Today such artificial stimulants to general happiness no longer find as strong an echo as before. Audiences do not like to have their intelligence underrated. They like to be talked to earnestly, to be taken into the lecturer's confidence. They want to be talked to naturally, which, as all the world knows, is one of the greatest arts.

While American audiences are strongly group-minded, they are also individualistic in that they like to hear about their own problems. "How does this affect *you*?" the lecturer asks. The *ad hominem* argument is as old as human eloquence and, as its Latin name indicates, was well known to classical times. If war breaks out in a distant corner of the world, I am naturally interested to know about its effects on my life. American audiences have no reticence about having the most outlandish issues related to their own everyday problems.

A "message" and practical suggestions are also ex-

pected by many American audiences. The former bespeaks the religious basis of the United States, and the latter is the result of the practical-mindedness of people in this country. American life is pragmatic. Abstract speculation has as yet no deep roots in the life of the United States. Knowledge is pursued for the good it may yield in the enrichment of existence. People in this country have a deep sense of justice—obvious to all whose personal experience on two continents enables them to compare the characteristics of the eastern and western hemispheres. The average American is not satisfied merely with the presentation of the problem. He is a man of action and wants to know what he can do about it?

“Personality” is a quality the American audience expects from public speakers. They must be fast-moving, colorful, dynamic, with plenty of “it.” The terrific pace of the movie and radio have spoiled audiences. Even though they may be too polite to show it outwardly, they get restless inwardly, unless some thrill is packed into every second. Nothing fascinates man more than his fellow man, and this is particularly true in America, where the pioneer spirit fostered neighborliness. Further, American audiences dislike “stuffed shirts”—those who stand on a high platform not merely physically but psychically. The lecturer may be a Nobel Prize winner, generally acclaimed as a phenomenon, but in the lecture hall he must display his interest in the problems of everyday people, be familiar with their language. He must break down the obstacles presented by the blinding foot-lights.

## II

There are few better ways of becoming acquainted with America than through the lecture platform. How does the United States look to the lecturer? I have myself covered the country from coast to coast and have interviewed lecturers. Lecturing is, of course, a business, the same as writing, and we should not be surprised if the man on the platform who has to catch or miss his trains in the dead of winter nights does so for money. Some of these lecturers are sociable, others are less so. The former like to shake hands and meet people. To the latter such social obligations are an ordeal. Some of them do it merely for money, others because they like to do it. Some of them are born teachers, who live their real lives on the platform. They put their souls into the work and are carried away by favorable audience reaction.

Whether they are of the one type or the other, they agree that by and large the American is the ideal lecture hearer. He listens to every word with close attention, afraid of losing even a crumb of valuable thought. He makes mental notes of what he hears and stores up his knowledge in his head. It is a grateful audience which responds quickly to attempts at being witty. At the same time, it can be a critical audience, whenever the listeners' sympathies are involved. A pro-Fascist lecturer would have an extremely hard time nowadays. Lecture audiences seem to be wholeheartedly devoted to the ideals of democracy.

Can you judge America's reactions through her lecture audiences? Probably they are the most enlightened and most articulate representatives of public opinion and therefore do not in all respects reflect the views of the entire population. If lecture audiences were fully representative, the United States would have joined the League of Nations long ago and changed its neutrality legislation in such a way as to assist the European democracies.

I had been in America only for a few weeks when I received the first request to "speak a few words." I still fail to remember how I managed to disentangle myself from the treacherous verbiage which had ensnared my steps. Struggling with a foreign language, speaking in public for the first time, I lost my consciousness in the third minute of my address and spent some fifteen more minutes in a desperate effort to wind up my "few words." Yet I got my share of applause when it was over; even a few words of encouragement. I decided promptly that Americans were the most considerate people in the world.

Since then I have said a "few words" in practically all parts of the country. In my experience the Pacific Northwest is the most responsive part of the United States. In Minnesota I encountered some difficulty at first in overcoming the reserve of the audience. Once that was done, they were the friendliest people imaginable. In the rural sections of North Carolina I found farmers so grateful for the little information I could give them that several held out their hands in sign of biblical blessing. In some out-of-the-way places I noticed that the younger generation was impressed by my command of English

and some of my hearers seemed to entertain doubts about the authenticity of my foreign origin. They asked me to say a few words in my native tongue, which I did to their great satisfaction. Wherever I went, people were interested, warm-hearted, kind and hospitable.

The warm reaction of American audiences was brought home to me most vividly in the Pacific Northwest. I stopped for some time in a coast city, where the Nazis were particularly aggressive. Night after night I was followed by a group of the audience. It turned out to be a self-appointed bodyguard, recruited for my protection. Although its members seemed to overestimate the danger, their thoughtfulness was touching. For evidences of such kindness one would have to travel far and wide in this world.

I cannot help contrasting the American attitude toward the speaker on foreign affairs with that of a large part of Europe. From time to time I visit the country of my birth, bursting with information about the United States. Yet I do not think they have ever asked my view about America. Not that they lack interest, but because they "know all," even though they have never come within three thousand miles of these shores. They have built themselves an imaginary America, based partly on hearsay, exaggerated newspaper stories, fantastic experiences of one-night visitors, and the false romanticism of the movies. Devoted to their brain children, they do not even want to hear the truth. They are afraid of losing a precious possession, all the dearer to them because it is far removed from reality.

How different is the attitude of people in the United States! After each trip to Europe, one is practically mobbed by eager students of foreign affairs who think that a trip abroad opens up the mystic recesses of "Truth." It is not enough for me to tell all about my experiences. I must also become a prophet and foretell doom or salvation for the world. In vain one pleads: "I am not licensed to practise as a prophet in the State of New York."

The eagerness of American audiences to learn is nowhere better revealed than in the so-called "question-period" after the formal lecture. I had been warned not to mind silly questions. I was told that often people asked questions not because they wanted to hear the answers, but because they wanted to hear themselves. Just the same, very rarely did it seem to me that the questioner had voiced his query merely for its own sake. Sometimes the speaker is carried away by his own ardor or by the inspiring influence of an attentive audience. Nearly always the audience brings him back to earth with a few pointed questions, which reflect not merely deep interest but a deeply felt sense of reality. Often the questions and discussions reveal the average American's amazing store of common sense, which is more valuable even than specialized knowledge.

When the lights of the lecture hall are dimmed and the audience disperses, one hears the echoes of the speaker's words. They are subjected to close analysis and discussion. Why did he say this and not say that?

Again one becomes aware of the deep earnestness with



which members of American audiences seek to find the way to truth. In no country is the voice of honest opinion so fully appreciated. America is still a comparatively young country, where people take one another seriously. They assume that the neighbor gives as much thought to great problems as they do.

This is one of the reasons why I can not share the view of those who foresee the spread of authoritarian ideas to these shores. Such ideas shun public discussion and intellectual honesty. Besides, American lecture audiences reveal the serious consequences of the national sense of humor. It would be difficult to imagine the American public listening to a self-appointed "strong man" offering salvation and a hundred chickens in every pot, as they have been doing in many overseas countries. It would sound too ridiculous and the audience might be tempted to laugh out of turn. America's lecture habit is a bulwark of democracy.



XII

CURT RIESS

*France*

“Your Hollywood”

CURT RIESS, born in Wuerzburg, Germany, 1902. Educated in Berlin, Zurich and Paris, studied literature and philosophy in Heidelberg, Munich and Berlin. First visited America in 1924. Returned to Berlin as a journalist. Emigrated from Germany after the advent of Hitler. American sports correspondent for the *Paris-Soir* in 1934, and later on motion picture correspondent and feature-story writer. Correspondent for the Swiss periodical publishing firm of Ringier & Cie., in 1935, also writer for papers in Holland and Scandinavia. In 1938, his articles on the United States were syndicated in fifty-five foreign newspapers and magazines. Author of a volume of short stories, a book on sports, and a book on Hollywood.

## XII

### *YOUR HOLLYWOOD*

By *Curt Riess*

#### I

**I**T happened in Paris, early in 1939. All the large cinemas were closed. The owners protested against an increase of the amusement tax. For a few days Paris remained without moving pictures. But the parties concerned got together rather quickly; the taxes were lowered, and the theaters opened again.

About that time I visited the manager of the Paris branch of the Hays office, a Mr. Smith, as charming as he is clever. Mr. Smith, too, spoke about the strike of the motion-picture theaters. Said he:

"In the United States one couldn't risk keeping the motion picture theaters closed. Not even for a week. . . ."

I looked at him. "Why, of course . . . one cannot throw the many hundred thousands in the motion-picture industry out of work."

"I am not thinking of that at all. What I mean is that nobody could risk letting millions of people stand around idly in the street. That might lead to a revolution."

Mr. Smith is quite right. How right he is, a short survey

of the most important statistics of the American motion-picture industry will show.

There are at present approximately sixteen thousand motion-picture theaters in the United States. In the year 1938, an average of eighty-five million people per week attended motion-picture performances; the box-office take during that year was one billion dollars; during the two preceding years, average annual attendance amounted to eighty-eight millions, and in 1930 even to one hundred and ten millions.

But let us consider the year 1938. Eighty-five million movie-goers! Which means that of the entire population of the United States, including babies, children, the aged and the sick, two out of every three persons attend the movies on the average of once every week.

These figures not only show what is generally known, namely, that the motion-picture industry is one of the biggest American industries, and will shortly be one of the biggest industries of the world; they show, above all, what Mr. Smith had emphasized: the pressing need for this industry.

The imperative need for the motion picture! The imperative need for amusement and diversion! Nothing would be less correct than to attribute the extraordinary popularity of the motion-picture industry to its technical perfection, the improvement of its artistic standards. All of this would merely explain the fact that the motion picture has weaned away the former patrons of the legitimate theater (especially in New York). This does not explain, however, why millions of people today look to

the motion picture for amusement and diversion, people who formerly had never found it necessary to look either for amusement or for diversion.

The explanation rests in these people themselves. Their life, and especially their vocational life, has during the last twenty or thirty years become so tense that it would hardly be bearable without some relief in diversion. Up until the present century, the profession or vocation has always been for most of mankind, and especially for Americans, the great adventure. The age of the assembly line, of mechanization of even the smallest detail and division of labor, has taken the last semblance of adventure from one's vocational activities. Money is earned by standing at the assembly line, by repeating the same manipulation many hundreds of times, perhaps many thousands. Working at the assembly line may be tolerable and perhaps not quite so boring as observers may imagine. But there is certainly nothing exciting in it, it gives no scope to self-expression. The work at the assembly line—in the real or symbolic sense—earns the money necessary to sustain life; but it does not make life worth living.

Even life itself resembles a product of the assembly line. The people live in houses or apartments which are identical in every respect, they wear suits and hats made by the millions, they smoke the same cigarettes, eat the same canned food and drive the same cars. Everything is standardized.

This is a statement of fact, not a complaint or even a criticism. It is evident that the standard of living of the

average American, which has become possible only because of this standardization, is incomparably higher than that of Europeans. It is evident, furthermore, that America is at the end of a development which is but beginning in Europe. This development is unavoidable and necessary. Standardization is the fate of our time.

This standardization produces a certain resentment in every human being, and also the desire to escape it, at least periodically, and to experience the unusual, the unforeseen adventure, which no longer exists in daily life, in some form or manner outside the general routine.

Modern psychology has created the conception of escapism. The term "escapism" has become the vogue. Not unjustly, for escapism seems to play a major role in the life of the average American.

This becomes the clearer to the European observer because he has a preconceived picture of the average American which is diametrically contrary to that of the escapist. This conception originated—with most conceptions which the Americans have of themselves—in the period of pioneering: in a time when there was so much urgent work that life was not only thrilling and interesting, but did not even allow for amusement or diversion, there was no need of escaping. The European imagines the American as a sort of super robot who jumps out of bed early in the morning, shaves with his right hand while he takes breakfast with the left, races to work with tremendous speed and spends his whole day and half the night at his place of work, the total of all this being re-



sponsible for the great inventions and unparalleled innovations in all branches of endeavor.

This isn't exactly the picture any longer, as the reader will agree. The assembly line and escapism have taken its place.

The masses flee from their own lives into others which are more beautiful, more heroic, and more adventurous. They flee—above all—to sports. There is nothing that helps people more easily and more informally out of the gray everyday routine and away from schematization and standardization than sports. Sports, by the way, have much in common with the motion pictures; or, better, a sports performance has much in common with a motion-picture performance. In both cases we have actors and an audience. In the motion picture, the place of action is make-believe; in sports, it really exists. In the motion picture, scenery represents a castle or a jail; in sports, people sit around the tennis courts or in the boxing ring. In the motion picture—illusion; in sports—reality. In the motion picture, everything is unrolled in certain pre-prescribed gestures. In sports, nothing is prescribed; nobody can tell what may happen in the very next minute. In the motion picture, a more or less precise reproduction of an action; in sports, action itself. In the motion picture, release from life through its reproduction; in sports, life itself. Thus sports offer something, a kind of redemption from everyday routine, which cannot be offered by the motion picture.

The looker-on identifies himself with the sportsman

or—to a more or less modest degree—becomes a sportsman himself.

The result—scores of millions of people attend sport events annually.

Perhaps the only thing in history comparable to this tremendous outpouring of American crowds at sporting events was the gladiatorial games and races of Imperial Rome. Pessimists are wont to compare American sport madness—plus the relief rolls—to the *panem et circenses* which seemed to be so closely connected with the decline of the Roman Empire. But, at least as far as sports are concerned, there is no parallel. American mass sports, unlike Rome's, come from within. They are the result of popular desire to see sporting spectacles and the decision of private individuals to profit by such desire. The motives may be unheroic, ignoble if you please. But these spectacles are not provided from above. Rome's gladiatorial shows definitely were not merely provided, but actually imposed from above. They were given to the populace in order to keep the popular mind from worrying over political or economic conditions—in other words, to avoid an explosion. Present-day mass athletics are provided by Hitler in Germany for precisely the same reason as that of the Roman emperor. Perhaps the only thing in common, in all these cases, is that the sporting spectacles do meet a public desire to get away from something—in this country, the pressure of the machine age.

Sport is one of many escapes. I should also mention the proverbial American passion for records, which is

related to the passion for sports and in them finds its origin. It has long left the branches of sport and taken hold of life in general. The almost morbid desire for ever new records is nothing else than a flight to optimism. (We are faster and stronger, thus better than our ancestors.)

As a type of escape or better as the result of escapism, a whole group of publications could be called upon. Take for instance the gossip columns which are part of all American newspapers, and by means of which the residents of a little town in Iowa or Nevada inform themselves about who had lunch with whom at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in New York. The late O. O. McIntyre, who specialized in these matters, was the most widely syndicated columnist in all of America; this is an incomprehensible fact—unless it is explained by escapism. Into this category also falls the fabulous multitude of magazines distributed every week or month throughout the country. I mention at random: 32 “Western” magazines, and 8 specializing in “Western Love” stories; 14 “pseudoscientific” magazines; 16 “sex” magazines; 13 which in contrast to the former concern themselves with “Love” and love only; 38 “detective” and “mystery” magazines; 9 “confession” magazines, etc., etc.

One must also include those magazines which are supposed to make it possible for the reader to digest at record speed a mass of information and facts, and which for that reason are called “digests.” There are—according to research—digests for everything: for magazine readers and

writers, for book readers and those interested in fashions, for farmers and bowlers, for sportsmen and connoisseurs of painting, etc.

And there are other forms—many other forms—of escape, such as radio, burlesques, certain types of publications; they are all very characteristic of America, and their particular type exists only in America. But I really want to talk about the motion picture—about the motion picture, which is escapist entertainment, as even Czar Will Hays admitted some time ago.

If the nation did not have its sixteen million motion-picture theaters, a revolution would ensue; so at least says Mr. Smith, and I am inclined to agree with him. Thus the motion-picture industry is not only one of the biggest in this country. It is more. It is part of American life without which life itself becomes almost unthinkable. It is a tremendous factor. The production of motion pictures has for the average American the same importance as the production of commodities, light and heat. Without motion pictures he could not live—at least not the kind of life he lives today.

Behind all this stands Hollywood.

Viewed from this angle, Hollywood takes on dimensions quite different from those of a mere gigantic factory. It appears as one of the centers of the nervous system of American life in general.

If the large automobile plants in Detroit manufacture an entirely new type of car, a majority of drivers will purchase this new kind of automobile; if the dress manufacturers put a new model on the market, the American

woman will wear this new model. If Hollywood releases motion pictures with brand-new ideas, eighty-five million Americans will view them every week. But Hollywood's influence penetrates even deeper than this. People will digest these new ideas, and these new ideas will influence them. Hollywood is not only a great industry. Hollywood is a decisive influence.

If you're going to write about Hollywood, you've got to keep that in mind. Hollywood is an influence, Hollywood is a factor. One can write about Hollywood almost in the same vein as about Washington. For America is ruled from Hollywood, too; and to a certain degree this is true of the world at large. Opinions are divided as to how far this is true. Most governments, nevertheless, consider Hollywood as an equal; if, for instance, an American motion picture is shown, making a laughing stock out of a foreigner or of a foreign institution, or even showing them to great disadvantage, the government of the country concerned protests directly or indirectly to Hollywood, as it would communicate a protest to a government of another country; yes, even threatens with retaliation or in the worst possible case with war (prohibition of the pictures of the company in question).

## II

It is allegedly easier for a reporter to write about Washington than about Hollywood. For many reasons.

When I decided about five years ago to go to Holly-

wood for the purpose of writing about Hollywood, the various European papers for which I worked were not particularly delighted by the idea. For them Hollywood was a town where motion pictures were produced. Good pictures, excellent pictures, granted; pictures which circled the globe, but still only pictures. My editors believed—and we shall presently see that they had some reason to do so—that motion-picture production was just as much a business as any other, and that the columns in the newspapers which best served those matters were the advertising columns.

Hollywood, by the way, shares this opinion within certain limits. Hollywood does not want any reports on Hollywood—paradoxical as this may sound. Hollywood wants publicity. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent annually for publicity in Hollywood. The material, sent out every year, could fill many warehouses. Millions of photos of stars, especially of the legs of stars. Ten thousand stories about such problems as coiffures, gowns, and the diets of the elect. If the reporter, be he an American or a European, knows how to adapt himself and his work to what is generally recognized as good Hollywood publicity, so much the better for Hollywood, so much the better for the reporter. Or else . . .

What are the limits of publicity? Where does reporting begin, where does it end?

Taken at face value, these two matters have nothing in common. The reporter is supposed to reproduce the reality, regardless of what this reality looks like. Publicity is supposed to sell the goods, i. e. motion pictures. If the

reality is such that it does not endanger success, so much the better for the reality. If the contrary is the case, publicity is called upon to edit reality.

Of innumerable examples of such editing, one remains outstanding in my memory. It was in spring—several years ago. One of the large motion-picture concerns prepared to release one of its pictures, having something to do with “love” and “being in love.” (There are such pictures.) The publicity department sent out a story to the press, beginning as follows: “It is spring in Hollywood. Everybody is in love . . .” A long list of names of stars followed—but only those who were under contract with the concern in question—and the names of those whom they were in love with or with whom they were seen under more or less romantic circumstances.

It would be misleading to claim that publicity lies. This is not so. Publicity isn’t so much the business of informing the public about stars as it is the art of influencing and even changing the lives of the stars and therefore the stars themselves to such an extent that the result is worth publicizing. A new reality is created. The everyday life of the stars is enacted before it is made public. The stars don’t act only in the studios. They also act in their everyday life. They act their everyday life. They play the roles publicity has given them; they are as the public is expected to know them. . . .

I know of a charming anecdote told about Marlene Dietrich which may perhaps illustrate best what I am endeavoring to show. I cannot vouch for the truth of the little story. *Si non è vero*. . . .

Several years ago when the star had just reached the heights of her popularity, her husband, who usually lives in Paris, came to Hollywood. Reporters hunted him down. He had to give them a detailed description of his married life with Marlene Dietrich. He was asked finally what he personally liked best in Marlene.

He laughed and said: "I personally like best the way she makes pancakes."

A few hours later all of America knew about the pancakes. But in Hollywood the publicity agents tore their hair. They cried: "Pancakes! Has anyone ever heard that pancakes are glamorous! And we have been trying all these years to build Marlene Dietrich up into a unique, strange and mysterious woman!"

### III

The reporter is supposed to describe reality as it is, as he sees it. What does Hollywood reality look like? Before I consider this subject more explicitly, I should like to say that the following is to be taken only in a general way and in no way pertains to any specific personalities. How does the Will Hays office put it? "Any similarity to life is purely coincidental." As everywhere, there are charming people in Hollywood. They have many good qualities, but they are all—we shall see why and how—a bit mad, full of complexes. Many of them are good friends of mine—or at least will be until these paragraphs appear in print.



All that is called life in Hollywood can be reduced to one common denominator.

To be more explicit: Take any theater anywhere on Broadway. It is closed during the day; at night, shortly after seven o'clock, it opens. A flow of people hurries through the stage door: actors, chorus members, dancers, musicians, wardrobe women, makeup men, stage hands, prompters, curtain riggers, lighting men. At eight-thirty they begin their work, seemingly assembled in haphazard fashion, yet each in his own way working toward that common goal of giving the thousand or two thousand people in the auditorium an illusion designed to divert and amuse them. This lasts until eleven o'clock or perhaps eleven-thirty. Then—the actors wash off their makeup, the musicians pack their instruments, the lighting men switch off the lights, the stage hands change into street clothes. And all these people leave the stage door and depart for their various destinations. And during the next twenty or twenty-one hours, or at least until the next performance, they become more or less normal people, who—exactly like those who compose their public—eat and drink, sleep, take walks, go shopping, in short, live lives which have nothing to do with the theater or necessarily concern the theater. For New York is a town which also exists outside of the theater and which can exist without it. Even if all theaters, even if the entire "Broadway" disappeared, New York would still remain New York.

But in Hollywood nobody ever lives a private life.

Hollywood is the adventure of those who live their lives back-stage.

The studio, or rather the total number of studios, is but a huge stage, a stage playing for the entire world. And Hollywood itself is but a single, enormous "back-stage."

There is no stage door through which to escape. One does not change into street clothes and mix with the general public until the next performance. One never separates from the rest of the cast. The performance never ends. There are always meetings, rehearsals, conferences, screen tests, makeup appointments, singing lessons, dancing lessons, appointments with the still photographer, sound tryouts. . . .

There is nothing in Hollywood that is not connected with the motion picture. If the motion picture were to disappear from the surface of the world tomorrow, Hollywood would disappear with it.

Hollywood represents an obligation—the obligation to pass the world's time away at the price of one's own life. Just so that people can go to the movies to tear loose for a few hours at least from a stodgy, humdrum existence, merely to laugh and cry about a fate which is not theirs. That these people may be happier for a few hours, a few thousand others in Hollywood must forget they have private lives.

Having played every emotion, these actors can no longer feel any. For them life exists only in the form of adaptation. Everything can be adapted and imitated in Hollywood: happiness in love, despair in suicide, Gothic

churches and African jungle, palaces for the rich and slums for the poor.

All you need to do is to state your specifications, and a whole new world can be constructed for you out of the contents of Hollywood warehouses. The many thousand volumes, found in every research library, answer any questions which life itself could ask. The farms in the vicinity of Hollywood grow every plant. There is no annual orchard that doesn't exist, or that cannot be duplicated in Hollywood. Hollywood has everything.

They have everything to imitate life, but as for life itself. . . . The people in Hollywood no longer live in normal houses. They live in settings of tremendous, exotic palaces. They live only from one role to the next, from one motion picture to the next. They live for that public which is the whole world. They never emerge from the stage door.

#### IV

Hollywood is all for publicity. Hollywood rests on the claim that it is a business undertaking. Two billion dollars is the investment! Incredibly many millions must be earned solely to justify such an investment. Huge amounts of money must be taken in, solely to produce one hundred and thirty-five million dollars' worth of motion pictures every year. Hollywood is a great business undertaking, and the managers of this business undertaking are justified in leaving no stone unturned to make it financially successful. They prefer pure adver-

tising—publicity—to running the risk of having stories told by people who are not primarily concerned with Hollywood's financial success. That is understandable.

The general public has a right to be informed of what happens in Hollywood, what Hollywood looks like, what kinds of pictures are produced, why they are produced and why they are not. More than two hundred journalists are in Hollywood for that purpose; more than 18,000 words are wired from Hollywood every day. And that means—really—that the reporter is required to write about everything that happens in Hollywood, regardless of whether Hollywood likes it or not. And because this is sometimes unpleasant to the moguls of Filmland (for reasons mentioned above) conflicts between Hollywood and newspaper reporters must frequently occur.

It would only be fair to mention that I was involved in such a conflict. I should not mention it if silence would not expose me to the risk of being accused of concealing a personal resentment against Hollywood, or even of being accused—in secret, of course—of being a publicity agent for Hollywood. In fact, I am blacklisted in Hollywood; I find myself in good company. Almost every reporter who at some time or other has written what he really thought of Hollywood has been blacklisted for a longer or shorter time. Even the Hollywood correspondent of the *New York Times* has been on that list. What does it look like—that blacklist? No more passes to the movies. No more cocktail parties.

I have to bear it.

## V

And since there can be no question about my relationship to Hollywood, may I be permitted to conclude by speaking about something that to me—as a reporter for papers in many countries—seems more important than the question of whether, and how much, money is made in Hollywood, even more important than the question of whether without Hollywood a revolution would break out; something that concerns me more than all these matters: Art.

“He’s at it again!” those in Hollywood will cry. At the word Art, Hollywood brass hats jump to the ceiling in nervous spasms. They are suspicious. The word ART sounds beautiful and sublime. They would like to use it in publicity releases. They use it whenever the opportunity presents itself; they accept—justly—the praise for a serious art effort, whenever such an effort is acknowledged by the critics. Sad as it may be, this isn’t always the case. Critics who recognize serious art efforts and acknowledge them, have the habit of writing seriously about motion-picture productions. That means that they cannot consider every picture a good effort, and thus certain financial setbacks are almost inevitable. This, of course, is not exactly pleasing to Hollywood.

In such cases, Hollywood protests most energetically. The critics are accused of preventing the industry from earning money. The validity of this claim is open to question. Criticism cannot be governed by material considerations. Criticism does not exist for the benefit of the in-

dustry but for the public, and is indirectly paid for by the latter. Frank Nugent, the excellent film critic of the *New York Times*, asked very rightly some time ago which books of world literature would ever have been written or published if the authors and publishers had always been influenced by financial considerations. Hollywood countered by saying that such a comparison was unjust because its risks mounted into millions while the risks taken by publishers were comparatively small. And generally—so Hollywood said—the chance of making money rests entirely in the production of pictures intended for the great masses, and not in the production of pictures for a few connoisseurs of art.

Are these goals mutually exclusive? Must such opposing aims exist?

The top men in Hollywood have always thought so; their purposes were always directed at making money through mass entertainment. Hollywood has earned much money since its very beginning. But the directors and actors strove from the self-same beginning to create mass entertainment by artistic means. And they tried to produce films which would keep pace with highly artistic standards. It began very early with D. W. Griffith and Chaplin, at a time when nobody in Europe (except Sweden) gave serious consideration to motion pictures.

Hollywood's entire tradition shows, time and again and to an ever-increasing extent, the unmistakable tendency toward serious art. The productions thus created were made in spite of the constant opposition of the producers, and by no means (with the exception of three or

four of them) with their consent or even help. From Chaplin to Stroheim, from King Vidor to Sternberg, from Greta Garbo to Cagney, they all had to fight to do what they wished to do. In spite of all this, their battles would have been fought in vain if the pictures—thus produced—had not earned millions of dollars. It is not true that an artistic film cannot be mass entertainment. There is no better proof of that than the history of Hollywood itself. Yet, the men on top still refuse to change their attitude and continue to assert that they would like to produce artistic films if it were not necessary for them to make money, and that they regret this state of affairs.

Such, then, is their purpose. And accordingly they are constantly obliged to obtain wherever they can new and fresh material for Hollywood. Should a valuable book or play appear, they are immediately impelled to gobble up the rights. Their talent scouts search America and the world for talented actors, directors, musicians, technicians, scenery designers, writers. Thus Hollywood became the meeting place of international talent. The artists come from California and Massachusetts, from Sweden and Rumania, from France and Germany, from England and Italy. They all come to Hollywood, a place which by now is only geographically located in the United States.

Here may be the place for a pertinent digression. Hollywood is anxious to get as much international talent as possible. There has always been a feeling in this country, a feeling now rapidly growing, that immigrants should be excluded because "these foreigners take the bread out of the mouths of our own people." This feeling may or

may not be justified as it applies to labor, skilled or unskilled. But the expression is sheer nonsense when applied to the world of ideas, science, and art. No scientist can be "replaced" by another. Certainly no artist can be "replaced." Great artists, on the contrary, create work instead of taking it away. For instance, you simply can't say seriously that if Greta Garbo had not come to our shores some American-born actress would now be occupying her place. It is much more correct to say that if Greta Garbo had not come there would not be any "place of Greta Garbo." That is, the particular type of picture she does would not be made. Thus, there would not have been the work for the supporting casts, writers, and technicians.

All the foreign talent comes to Hollywood, I repeat. An artist, torn from his native country, is in himself a problem. For an artist, according to a current conception, becomes sterile, once he is uprooted and torn from the ground on which he grew. Hollywood proves that the contrary is true.

Hollywood proves that uprooting and distance may become artistic functions. Almost all of these artists come from towns or countries in which they developed artistically but could not show the results of this artistic development or put it to advantage. That may be due to many causes: limited artistic horizons in some countries; censorship in others; professional intrigues; racial laws; general reaction. They come to Hollywood. They come without illusions. They know that Hollywood squanders talent and that only a fraction of the good pictures which



could possibly be made with the available talent, is produced.

But despite all the misunderstandings and despite the tremendous amount of waste, Hollywood remains extremely important to the productive artists. Here they are independent of petty economic handicaps, and free from political restraints. Here they live as if on an island, protected from everyday worries, separated by many thousands of miles from distracting situations.

Thus their sense of human dignity grows stronger. The physical and mental isolation makes it possible for them to dedicate themselves to the artistic problems of our epoch. And thus modern pictures are created, modern in the fullest sense of the word.

Let there be no mistake about this: this happens quite contrary to the intentions of the producers. They want to put escapist entertainment on the market. They want to get away as far as they can from our epoch, from the people of our time and their problems. Doesn't the Hays office insist that every picture with the exception of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck bear the label, "The events and characters depicted in this photo-play are entirely fictitious. Any similarity to life is purely coincidental"?

Indeed, the Hays office insists, the producers insist; but right under their nose, right under their hands, works are created whose similarity to reality is by no means coincidental, whose problems are the problems of our time.

Nor is it an accident that in Hollywood, above all, the

interest in workers' movements, in unionism and in the opposition against fascism grows stronger day after day. It may seem ridiculous to some people that persons with weekly earnings amounting to \$4000 and \$5000 organize in unions. Frank Nugent speaks about the stars and "their flirtation with reality." It is more than a flirtation. It is more serious. It is no accident that Mussolini's son, and Hitler's representative Leni Riefenstahl, were not received in Hollywood. It is no accident that more films are produced year after year which pertain to our time and our problems, either by transporting ideas and situations into other generations and other environments as John Ford, William Dieterle and Paul Muni do it, or by creating an extremely intensive contemporaneity which always seems about to explode, as is done by Fritz Lang, James Cagney and Bette Davis; or by transporting these problems into a grotesque or sad land of makebelieve, as Chaplin, and to a certain degree Frank Capra, are wont to do. Or by just showing the people of our time in their insecurity, their inhibitions, doubts and hopelessness, as pictured by Gary Cooper, Edward Robinson, William Powell, Charles Boyer and Irene Dunne.

From an artistic point of view all this is novel, in essence as well as in form. These innovations could have been created only in Hollywood and could develop only there. Many things had to be combined: the unlimited means of a great American industry; the massing of international talent, mutually stimulated to the improvement of their accomplishments; the distance making it possible for them to see and recreate reality and problems

from a synoptic point of view; the American public which is second to none in its constant receptivity and in its eagerness for something new.

## VI

The public has nothing but the moving pictures. There is no American theater. There may be a New York theater and some road shows of New York plays. These may play throughout America and may be very successful. But they are not substitutes for the local theater; the theater should grow out of its native soil, should be drenched with local color.

Of course, there are some essays at the creation of a local theater in the United States. The Federal Theater Project was really well on its way to produce a local theater, and it is a pity, for this and for many other reasons, that it has come to an end. There are also various groups of amateurs producing excellent plays throughout the country. But since they are mostly done for members of societies, clubs, and the like, they usually represent, and are symptomatic of, not so much the atmosphere and the life of their town or city, as of a particular set in that town, usually an artistic or intellectual set.

I must also mention the "straw hat" or summer theater, the vogue for which seems to be increasing by leaps and bounds. But since these projects, for the most part, are carried on by professional actors and directors, and since, in the present state of affairs, the only possible goal of these professionals is to get on Broadway, all these sum-

mer theaters desire to do, or possibly can do, is to create more or less second-rate Broadway theater. However, it is only fair to say that by the mere fact of carrying on at all, they do help, as the Federal Theater project helped, to kindle local interest in things theatrical and to build up, maybe, in some far-distant future, a true local, American theater.

The theater cannot be transplanted. On the other hand, the motion picture is not necessarily so conditioned. It has not any local color or even any national color, since it is in theory and also in practice international, if, as in Hollywood, it is produced by international collaboration, and if it—at times—reaches that degree of perfection which makes it comprehensible and interesting in the interior of Africa as well as in Greenland, Russia or Sicily.

In this perhaps lies the beginning of American art, the coming of which is so impatiently expected. Why not? Because the gentlemen in Hollywood are not interested in it? Because they feel that the motion picture should only be escapist entertainment for the broad mass of people? A new idea, a new art has always surmounted opposition and come into its own.

Hollywood is a beginning, a possibility. There an American art may be created, American—because it would not be possible elsewhere—in a world where everybody fights everybody else and where nationalism and chauvinism celebrate their barbaric triumphs—an American art because it will be an international art. And therefore, if there were no Hollywood in existence, we would have to build one.

XIII

YASUO E. MURAOKA

*Japan*

“American Goodwill Toward  
Japan”

YASUO EVERETT MURAOKA, born in Tokyo, Japan, 1896, studied in Tokyo and at the University of Southern California. Began journalistic career with the Los Angeles *Japanese Daily News*. Editor of the *Japanese American*, in New York City, since 1923, and New York correspondent for the *Hochi Shimbun*, Tokyo, Japan, since 1934.

### XIII

## AMERICAN GOODWILL TOWARD JAPAN

By *Yasuo E. Muraoka*

#### I

ALTHOUGH I have covered news here for more than twenty years, the United States remains in my mind almost as I visualized it as a youth in Japan. Then, like any other untraveled Japanese, I saw it as a fabulous country, a nation of gargantuan capacities and herculean deeds. Now—though I have many years of observation behind me—there is little change. The picture is sharper; there is much more detail in it, but the same sweeping grandeur of the canvas that I had first daubed in my mind is still there. The United States to me is still the land of fable.

The average American, I believe, on his first visit to Japan, is impressed instantly by the cleanliness, the politeness and, might I say, the picturesqueness of the Japanese. Here, the visiting Japanese is not impressed, but overwhelmed by the electrifying vitality of the American people. And the longer he lives in the country, the more he is amazed by the ceaseless torrent of energy that surges through every stratum of society.

Today, although I can call myself a typical New

Yorker—and I really am one since my habits and the pattern of my ways are very much the same as those of the millions in the city—I still wonder what steps-up the urban American, what makes him feel that destiny is prodding him on to do that in two minutes which could be done just as well in five. I say I wonder, but perhaps I do not. Perhaps, like so many Japanese who have associated with Americans, I am doing the same thing—trying to get something done a little faster all the time.

Sports—the bond which will always link the Americans and the Japanese—is the one medium through which Americans best express their get-it-done philosophy. I found this out in my student days here. And I find it as true after twenty years as it was when the realization first came to me.

To really know America, I learned, it is necessary to become a part of that great surging emotional mass that is a football or a baseball crowd. Then, although you might attempt to hold your emotions in check, you run the gamut of feeling. You are on your feet urging the batter to hit. You are clenching your fists, exhorting a halfback to make his end run. You are at the ringside or the radio, mentally shifting, feinting, punching.

My first baseball game here was a clash between two university teams. Only over here a short time, I felt on the outside. I still regarded myself as the alien and kept somewhat aloof to hide my timidity.

The first two innings of the game were slow. Batters were grounding out. No line drives were being made. It was like the first few rounds of a bout in which two



skilled boxers are feeling each other out. In the third inning the first man up smashed a clean single through short-stop. The next man dropped a bunt between the first baseman and the pitcher, and one man went to third and the batter was safe at first. The next man took two balls and a called strike and then rifled a liner into left field. One man crossed the plate and the other two were safe on second and third.

And where was I, the alien Japanese student? In my seat peering in puzzlement at the action on the diamond? Sitting with quiet dignity, while others yelled themselves hoarse? I certainly wasn't. When I returned to my usual self I still was on my feet, clenched fists in the air and my throat ragged from my shouts.

That experience is one I have never forgotten. Since then I have attended hundreds of baseball games and other sports events here, but that initial game remains for me my real introduction to Americanism.

Hundreds of thousands of persons in Japan have learned to know and respect the United States because of the visits of its sportsmen. Men like Walter Hagen, who once enjoyed the rare honor of teaching golf technique to H.M. the Emperor, and Gene Sarazen, in a sense, have contributed more to international goodwill than the efforts of a score of diplomats. Hagen, especially because of his skill and sportsmanship, made many friends on his last tour of Japan.

One sportsman who won the heart of Japan was Lou Gehrig. A superman of baseball, his batting feats in Japan during the tour of America's baseball stars, are still

remembered. And today many a Japanese university baseball player dreams of the day when he will be called the "Lou Gehrig of Japan." And Japanese baseball fans—the most enthusiastic in the world, frequently turning out 100,000 strong for a university game—never will forget Gehrig's praise of Japanese baseball players.

Other baseball aces on that trip to Nippon won friends throughout Japan. Men who were sportsmen from the soles of their feet to the top of their heads, they presented Americans in a very favorable light to the Japanese. More sport junkets such as that, by the sportsmen of the world, and there would be less misunderstanding.

An incident illustrating the friendly attitude developed by the visits of sportsmen to Japan occurred last fall during an airplane flight between Buffalo and Detroit, when Mickey Cochrane, former manager of the Detroit Tigers, met Mrs. Monica Ito and her daughter, Yuriko, as they were speeding back to the Pacific Coast and their ship to Japan.

An American Airline stewardess was responsible for the meeting. Having heard of the interest of the Japanese in baseball, she asked the two kimono-clad visitors if they would like to meet the famous Mickey Cochrane. The answer, of course, was yes.

Cochrane, who had been on the baseball tour of Japan, was greatly pleased with the meeting. How was this person, and that? And how did Tokyo look today? For more than an hour, the three, roaring over the American countryside, forgot nationality and talked as three sports-lovers about mutual friends on both sides of the Pacific.

Such incidents, multiplied, make for international understanding.

Our Japanese swimmers, tennis players, golfers, and even billiard players, also have ably represented Japan on unofficial goodwill tours of this country. I know this to be so because some years ago I toured the country with Kinrei Matsuyama, balkline billiard champion, and never had a more enjoyable time in my life. Many times during that trip I heard Americans say, "You know, I never knew you Japanese were such good guys until now."

## II

Possibly my greatest feeling of familiarity with Americans—other than when I am part of a sport spectacle—comes to me when I am with American newspapermen. Frank, inquisitive, reasonable and friendly, they dismiss the barriers of nationality and discuss themselves with startling objectiveness and expect you to do the same.

Seemingly removed from set opinions about themselves or their country, they have given me glimpses of the American mind which I have since found invaluable. They also have investigated my mind, and asked me to explain the Japanese to them. Never have they indicated that we were an inexplicable people. Instead, they sought to know from me why we did this and that, just as I have questioned them for the same reasons.

Some of the happiest days of my life in the United States have been spent in the company of American newspapermen. And during these days, it was never a

case of a Japanese newspaperman associating with a number of American writers. It was just a lot of newspapermen of no particular nationality enjoying themselves together.

This was particularly true recently when I covered the death and funeral ceremonies of Hiroshi Saito, former Japanese Ambassador to the United States. An admirer of the former envoy, I felt his death deeply. Covering this story, I found that the Washington reporters were almost as profoundly moved as myself. It was their feeling that a "swell guy" had died. And, although as a Japanese I was aware that my nation had lost one of its greatest sons, I realized my feeling was identical with theirs.

During the days that I covered the story of Saito's death, I heard many anecdotes about him from newspapermen. To them, "he was regular," a man who spoke out—used their own idioms—played the game according to what they knew as American standards. Their casually spoken praise to me was as great an honor as that accorded his memory by the United States Government and the general American public.

All during my years in the United States, association with American reporters has been a tonic to me. This was particularly true during the wave of hysteria that swept the country immediately following the unfortunate *Panay* affair.

During that period I must confess I was a bit uncomfortable. Shop girls, bookkeepers, laborers, passing me in the street, flicked me with unfriendly glances and, in a

number of cases, went out of their way to express their feelings.

But not so among the newspapermen. Dropping into their habitual rendezvous on the East Side, in downtown New York, in Washington, I received the same jesting salutations and the same invitations to join them at their tables.

From their attitudes, you would never have been aware that headlines screamed and 12-point bold-faced leads more than hinted, that conditions between the United States and Japan were dangerously near the breaking point. There was no hysteria about them. "We make hysteria," one of them laughed one night. "How can we get excited about these things, when our own emotions don't extend beyond the first joint of two fingers." Instead, it was the same shop talk, the same sarcastic exchange.

Do not think that these friends of mine avoided the *Panay* incident. Not at all! They surrounded me and gave me thorough "goings-over." How did it happen? Was it deliberate? What was its significance? They did not accuse or damn. They asked. And since they regarded me, not only as a Japanese, but as a frank, outspoken member of their clan, they expected me to clear up questions in their mind in an equally frank and outspoken fashion. This I did.

Other times, in hot debates springing out of the headlines, they have pitched into me unmercifully and questioned Japan's right to wage war on the Asiatic continent.

Is Japan's imperialistic march to world conquest on the way? Is Japan out to gobble up China? What's Japan fighting for, world prestige?

Even though my newspaper friends on these occasions intentionally were out to disturb me, they always gave me an audience, and were the first to agree when I proved my case. And, invariably, when the debates were over, they returned with me to the impersonal chit-chat of sports, the latest news story and the gossip of the city.

There is one criticism I have to make about my friends, though. That is, their lack of knowledge about Japan. Good newspapermen, they are thoroughly conversant with political and economic developments in their own country, but woefully ignorant about conditions in other lands. This ignorance, even though I have been aware of it for a score of years, still is a source of surprise to me.

Great changes are taking place in Japan. Highly industrialized, inexorably evolving into a nation which in time will be equal in every respect to any country of the Occident, Japan, to these well-informed newspapermen, remains a colored picture on a calendar of a year long since gone by. Not only are they unaware of the political parties ruling the country, but they are unaware of the names of the men who are the outstanding factors in the political life of Nippon today. Of course, they can speak glibly of those names which have become international in significance, but that is all. The names that are of paramount importance to the Japanese people, but not international in scope, are meaningless to them.

As a Japanese citizen I must admit I am nettled by this

lack of interest on the part of my friends. Knowing as I do that Japan today is one of the great nations of the world, I feel that men concerned with news should be concerned with what's happening in Japan.

Newspapering and newspapermen in Japan present a different picture. There, virtually every reporter and writer speaks and reads English. Pick one at random and mention Senator Borah, Al Smith, Governor Lehman, Senator Bilbo, Senator Carter Glass, and you will get an answer indicating that the reporter has a pretty thorough knowledge of the political setup in the United States.

This interest on the part of the Japanese newspapermen covers almost every phase of American life. Aware that America is an important factor in Japan's history—and, no doubt, in Japan's future—they keep in touch with current affairs here, and can discuss the American theater, economics, politics and general news.

Let a news figure from the United States visit Japan and see how the Japanese reporters deal with him. Familiar with the notable's background, they question him intelligently, surprising him with their knowledge of his career. Then let a Japanese celebrity, one who is not an international figure, visit here, and see what happens. As the gentlemen of the press are unaware of his significance, he is not even interviewed.

This neglect I know to be true, because on several occasions I have tipped off American newspapermen about visiting Japanese notables—and this after the visitors had been here a couple of weeks—and have seen them write stories that were given good play in their news-

papers. The point I want to make here is that if the newspapermen had been as familiar with Japan as they should have been, the distinguished Japanese visitors would have been interviewed before they had stepped down the gangplank.

## III

Just about as open-minded as newspapermen today are the American businessmen. Willing to discuss any phase of world politics with you at almost any time when it does not interfere with business, and even at times when it does, they invariably show a willingness to let you have your say.

As a golf addict I meet up with them every week. And as a rule, at the nineteenth hole, I find myself pontificating on Far Eastern affairs, with my businessmen friends seeking information at every turn of the conversation.

It seems to me it has always been so since I have been here. In Los Angeles and San Francisco, I sat in clubhouses discussing the Far East with Americans. This week, no doubt, I will be discussing the same questions and dealing with about the same problems in some clubhouse in New York.

But twenty years ago, the questions, while intelligent, were not as direct as those that are asked today. For that matter, the men who ask them are not like those of two decades ago.

Twenty years ago there was a complacency about Americans, a feeling that America was sufficient unto



itself, and that the international aspects of the world had little bearing on internal problems. American business would always go on no matter how the rest of the world was doing, was the general attitude, so that the questions asked of me were almost academic. They were the expressions of the curiosity of intelligent minds, and hardly more. Too infrequently were they linked to a realistic viewpoint that saw the United States and Japan as two countries inextricably bound together by an almost essential trade.

Today my interrogators ask few idle questions. What will be the motor market in Japan in 1950? Will American exports to Manchukuo mean an eventual mechanization of the country? Is it true that Japan finds American industrial methods superior to others? These are samples.

The American businessman I meet today is not only more alert than the man of twenty years ago, but he is friendlier. He might ask, "What are you fellows up to over there?" But, at the same time he is discussing business and baseball with you, and wondering aloud if the United States and Japan won't get together in time and reach trade agreements that will mean money to both. At least, this is my impression of him today.

Despite occasional waves of hysteria and the methodical dissemination, by foreign powers, of misstatements about Japan's purposes, it is my claim that the average American—and I am speaking about citizens of the forty-eight states—is friendlier toward the Japanese than he has been for years. Newspaper headlines may contradict this; radical provocateurs may ridicule it, but I know that in

my travels I now meet with more interest in Japan than I ever have met before.

An illustration of what I mean is this. About ten years ago, as a Japanese newspaperman, I traveled with a touring troupe of Japanese show people. There was hardly a section of the country that we did not visit. The tour was a success. But people came to see the show out of curiosity. They wanted to see the strangers from an "exotic" empire. The questions they asked me were such that it seemed that to the people of the United States Japan was one huge orchard of cherry blossoms.

When I travel today I meet the same friendliness—a deeper friendliness is my claim—but the questions have more significance. Exports, imports, cotton, silk, not cherry blossoms, are the subjects discussed.

Americans today see the economic links between the two countries. They realize daily that one country needs the other, so they talk about it.

Japan is no longer a legendary country on the other side of a distant horizon. It is now a market for American goods, a source of culture and a factor in the reshaping of the world. Americans are beginning to realize this, and the picture-postcard conception of Japan is being supplanted by factual photographs of reality.

This is for the best, for when Americans begin to understand the purposes of Japan, they will realize that there never will be any basic differences to serve as barriers between the two countries. They will realize that Japan is not an aggressor nation, but a nation defending

itself against the destruction of its future. And they will come to see that the similarity between the people of Japan and those of the United States is a guarantee that nothing will ever part the bonds of friendship linking the two nations.

I am extremely happy that I am still covering news in the United States today. Here are taking place a shifting of standards and a revaluation of things. Here is developing a realistic attitude toward life that is an indication that the country is coming of age and is no longer one of the younger nations. New forms of large-scale business organizations, like holding companies, chain-store systems, are being devised to meet the need of mass production and mass consumption. Government lending organizations like the RFC are meeting new credit needs. New controls are being set up so that the power of big business may not be misused. A more realistic attitude toward foreign trade is being shown by your acceptance of the idea behind the Hull trade pacts, and such agencies as the Export-Import Bank. And you are quickly turning to new forms of transportation needed for a generation even more active than yesterday's, in the development of air transport and streamlined railroad trains. Even though some of the new socializing agencies of the government prove faulty in some respects, you are at least tackling these problems seriously. And the rest of the world is looking to see what you will do next, and to copy your successes. So much, in the realms of invention, of business practice, of social organization, is now actu-

ally being brought to pass—things that make real all those dreams of the greatness of America that meant so much to me when I was a youth in Japan.

This same spirit of progress and modernization is also changing Japan. There, a new structure is rising on the foundations of centuries-old traditions. And it is my belief, even after many years of absence, that when I return I will instantly feel at ease. Not because it is the land of my birth, but because the spirit there will differ little from the spirit that now stirs the country in which I live.

XIV

HAROLD BUTCHER

*England*

“The ‘Real’ America in the West”

HAROLD BUTCHER, born in Colchester, England. Did newspaper work in Colchester and London. First came to the United States in 1921. American headquarters New York, but "commuter" to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Specialized in travel articles, having toured the United States, Europe, and the Far East. At present feature writer for a group of British papers, including the London *Daily Herald*, Liverpool *Echo*, and Leeds *Yorkshire Evening Post*.

## XIV

### *THE "REAL" AMERICA IN THE WEST*

*By Harold Butcher*

#### I

THE most exciting thing a foreign correspondent can do is to get out of New York. For weeks, months, perhaps years. He cannot forever shake off Manhattan dust from his shoes because the City of Skyscrapers, the City of the Seven Million, is always alluring to a newspaperman; but when he does succeed in tearing himself away—promising to return some day!—he will discover the "real" America.

For the correspondent who must send daily cables to his home country this is a counsel of perfection; he is tied to New York, the news center of the nation. But for the feature writer, for the correspondent who can afford to ignore the "hard" news and take his time to know the normal life of America, the thing to do is to leave New York and to travel here, there and everywhere over America's more than 3,000,000 square miles.

My home was in New York for seventeen years varied by summer trips to Europe and twice round the world, also by one tour of this country from the Atlantic to the Pacific and back in 1925. Out-of-townners frequently

told me I would never know America while I stayed in New York, that the "real" America could never be found there. Occasional visits to Washington did not count; brief trips to Buffalo and Cleveland, to Detroit and Chicago, to Minneapolis, Salt Lake City and San Francisco, to Los Angeles, Hollywood and New Orleans helped in my education but did not complete it. The one vital thing was to clear out of New York and live out of New York for a period. That was the way to know America.

One afternoon last winter I was at tea in Santa Fe, New Mexico, with friends in the living room of a small adobe house seated around a log fire in the open adobe fireplace. The company mainly consisted of newspaper writers, with a painter, a poet, a musician for good measure, all from different parts of the country, even from different parts of the world—New England, New Jersey, California, England, Poland, Russia.

Outdoors, deep white snow at the foot of piñon- and juniper-covered mountains; a western sky made lovely by the setting sun.

Criticism of New York was almost bitter. "I never want to go back there—except for a visit once every two years!" was one viewpoint. "New York isn't normal. Obsessed with sex, café life, night-clubs. The real life of America is in the West."

It would be more difficult to speak of the "real" Europe than of the "real" America, because Europe is split up into many different and warring countries. But even in America it is not possible to view the country



as a whole, to distil its essence. Composed of forty-eight states, its winter climate ranging from the tropics of Florida to the sub-zero of North Dakota, there is nothing uniform about the country save a common language and the same flag. And even the common language is not universal, for New Mexico is bilingual and legal notices must be published in English and Spanish.

So who shall say where the "real" America is to be found?

It is in the West that one gets a new slant on America in more senses than one. Again and again I have found places which reminded me of that fabulous land in the mountains of Tibet so alluringly portrayed in James Hilton's *Lost Horizon*. Quite recently I found an American Shangri-La in the semi-desert lands of the Southwest. Our motor party stopped outside the high adobe wall of an estate in a nondescript adobe village. When the door opened we stepped into an enchanting oasis; outside a dusty road, inside green lawns, trees in blossom, with blossom like snowflakes on the grass; irises, tulips and many other flowers whose names I did not know. Several adobe dwellings, well built, beautiful; gracious patios. When the door in the wall was closed there came from the village the sound of young men singing Spanish songs, and the life of the village which had seemed so drab became romantic when heard from the garden. It seemed incredible that this was as truly a part of the United States as the skyscrapers of New York or the stockyards of Chicago.

A wealthy Chicago woman owns this intoxicating oasis

of luxuriant vegetation, but most of the year she lives in her Chicago apartment overlooking Lake Michigan or in traveling about the world. Her New Mexican home, however, is never neglected; she can afford to keep it charming even when she is not there to enjoy its charms. All the rooms of the adobe houses on the estate are attractively furnished in Spanish and Indian style, and she employed a distinguished artist to adorn the dining room with mural paintings. She can do everything with the grand air of a Renaissance princess!

There is more to this *Lost Horizon* story than the description of one perfect home and garden rescued from the surrounding aridity. This oasis is a symbol of what can be accomplished in America by the application of modern science to what would otherwise be uninhabitable country. True, simple irrigation methods were applied here as in ancient Egypt, and the poor—Indians and Spanish-Americans—lived here before Chicago heiresses were dreamed of; but the significant fact is that here one can live amid the comforts, even the luxuries, of civilization enfolded by the breath-taking beauty of mountain and mesa, river and desert.

Near this estate is Black Mesa, one time regarded by the Indians as the center of their world. Easily reached, one can climb this formerly volcanic tableland to sit or stretch out upon the sparse grass and absorb the grandeur of the scene. The beauty of it is almost painful; one aches with beauty. The softness of pastel colors—blues, greens, yellows, reds—plays upon the eyes until the receptive brain is overwhelmed by so much loveliness. And—ex-

citing thought!—this *is* America, as truly America as the city slums and coal mines, the steel mills and automobile factories. It is, moreover, an America to which refrigerators and air-conditioning, telephones and radios, electricity and plumbing can be brought by those who, wishing to live here, can afford to bring them.

About forty miles from this estate lives a rancher whose range extends for thousands of acres. When the roads were too bad for an automobile, he used to reach his ranch by private airplane, a magnificent gesture, truly twentieth-century in the use of the latest in transportation to overcome remoteness from civilization. He renounced New York and Washington—save for occasional trips by train and plane—to live in as romantic a country as any man can crave. He has equipped his ranch with all modern conveniences save the telephone. He generates electricity on the spot; the plumbing of his bathrooms is faultless. His shower baths are as invigoratingly cold or as soothingly hot as any in New York. Steam heat in radiators makes his rooms comfortable on the coldest nights and mornings. By radio he gets all the news of the world and some of its best music. He has solved the problem of being in the world but not of it.

Because modern science can achieve wonders when applied to the comforts of living, I think of the Southwest as the region of the future not of the past. A New York friend of mine referred to Santa Fe as "that ancient civilization," evidently thinking of the primitive practices of the Indians and of the medievalism of the Spanish-Americans. What he overlooked was the vitality of both Indians

and Spanish-Americans; also what Anglos have done and are still doing in introducing a modern mode of living.

I know an old Spanish-American—Lorenzo Lopez by name—who ought to be living in the eleventh century; his whole spirit, his rich devotion is medieval. He has built with his own hands a little chapel of stone and adobe on land he owns by the side of a winding road that leads to the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The chapel is in honor of San Ysidro (born 1070 in Madrid), a saint venerated throughout New Mexico as patron of fields and harvests. Here on the eve of San Ysidro's feast day Lorenzo Lopez comes with his relatives, neighbors and friends to say and sing prayers to "Sancta Maria, Madre de Dios," to San Ysidro and many other saints, while candles burn in the chapel and luminarios burn on rooftops and the hillock on which the chapel stands. There is nothing merely quaint about the scene; it has a deep religious quality. Moreover, it is extraordinarily vital, as truly a part of America today as a trade union meeting or a Fifth Avenue parade. The same is true of the Corpus Christi procession every year through the streets of Santa Fe, when the Blessed Sacrament is carried in a monstrance from the Cathedral of St. Francis to temporary wayside shrines while hundreds of onlookers, faithful Catholics and disbelieving Anglos, kneel. A band plays religious music, reminiscent of the Salvation Army, and men and women sing haunting Spanish hymns. This is not a show put on for tourists, it is part of the life of the city. It is not a quaint folk survival; it is as real today

as it was in 1540 when the Spaniards first came to the land which is now New Mexico.

## II

Have tourists and writers and artists spoiled Santa Fe and the Southwest? Only in the sense of making these places self-conscious; nothing could spoil anything so much alive. Certain Indian pueblos have been spoiled through catering to tourists, but Indian life persists beneath external change. Acee Blue Eagle, noted Pawnee and Creek Indian artist, of Muskogee, Oklahoma, who has lectured at Oxford University and in Paris and Washington, D.C., told me he believed the Indians would eventually be absorbed into the main stream of American life; if so, Indian life as we know it today will perish, although the Indian contribution to the life of America will be as vital as is that of the immigrant from England or France, from Germany or Scandinavia, Italy or Spain, Russia or Poland, or any other part of the world. But if America were ever involved in a universal catastrophe—a future war to end war fought on this continent, for example—I would count on the survival of the Indian against the more sophisticated white who has grown to be dependent upon modern inventions. It is amusing to hear people talk of teaching the Indian this or that. He may have to be taught the English language and the way to work the latest mechanical gadget; but the original American, here centuries before the white man came, needs

no instruction in the art of survival. Puritans and Spaniards in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, not to mention pioneers in succeeding centuries, did a pretty thorough job in exterminating him, but they did not complete their job. He is alive today, and, according to Commissioner John Collier, of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, he may even catch up in numbers to the population of pre-white invasion days. He is not a member of a dying race.

In a Hopi village, on the fringe of the Painted Desert in Arizona, I visited an adobe house where a couple of Indian women were seated on the living-room floor stirring cornmeal dough. The furnishings of the room showed the modern influence, but the women just had to sit as their ancestors had sat for centuries! Outdoors a little girl was running about proudly with a new pair of high rubbers on her feet. Nearby the carcass of a freshly killed sheep was hanging outside a hut to dry. Elsewhere corn was being ground on stones in the ancient way. A mother was carrying her baby on her back, wrapped in a bright shawl. The inevitable kiva, with a ladder leading down to the sacred room of religious ceremonies, occupied a prominent place in the village. The Indian continues his way of life as though automobiles, airplanes, radio had never been invented; he uses these things occasionally, but they do not affect his inner life; they leave his essential philosophy untouched. "The meek shall inherit the earth." Will the Indian, who has not been caught up by the craze to make armaments to kill millions of human beings, still be living his simple life

when sophisticated peoples have destroyed themselves with machine guns, bombs and poison gas?

### III

A truly Western American is the cowboy, who is not a Hollywood product but a real personality. He is a romantic figure, a he-man, an outdoors man—bronzed, handsome, tall, broad-shouldered, slender-hipped, upright in the saddle. I mean the average cowboy found in America's still untamed West—the man who starts life early among horses and cattle on his father's farm, who graduates to the job of cow-punching, and winds up at a dude ranch where vacationists from cities get a taste of outdoor life and ride into desert or mountain with cowboy guides.

My cowboy guide to the bottom of the Grand Canyon told me what he thought of the open-air life he leads. "This life is for a young man, a single man," he said. "But you can't keep it up forever. If you live and die a cowboy, what have you accomplished?"

"You've had a good time, and that is something," I suggested.

This struck him as a new idea. "I hadn't thought of that," he said. He told me he would like to buy a farm and settle down, but did not know whether he would ever do it. "Being a cowboy gets into the blood, and then you cannot quit," he added.

I talked with another cowboy—an older man. He had done everything—handled horses and cattle, had several

narrow escapes from death. Yes, he had enjoyed the life, including his adventures, but he had made no money. "By the time you've fed and clothed yourself there's not much left over."

"Why don't cowboys organize a union?" I kidded. Cowboys seem the most unorganizable of human beings. Rodeo cowboys have organized themselves—but they are showmen. I could not picture the genuine cowboy as the member of a union.

The cowboy's reaction was violent. He didn't want a union. He had always been able to earn a living without a union. He didn't want any of those "agitators." And what he wouldn't like to do to John L. Lewis! I changed the subject.

The cowboy is an amiable fellow, but even the most amiable occasionally goes on a binge. In the fighting mood induced by liquor he may get in a row with "Mexicans," which is his term for Spanish-Americans, a term offensive to them. Getting into a row with "Mexicans" means trouble—plenty of it. The "Mexican" technique is to get one's pals together and then set on the man alleged to have started the fight. It is a technique "Mexicans" follow among themselves and not merely in dealing with Anglos. The cowboy who has been reared in the Anglo-Saxon tradition of using his fists in a fight discovers that he has to contend with a technique that begins with smashing a bottle over his head while he is held by "Mexicans," and is followed up by hurling anything in sight—chairs, tables, more bottles. When things get really nasty, knives appear, and the cowboy, having biffed as many



"Mexicans" as possible in eyes and jaws, decides, at long last, that discretion is the better part of valor. He beats it. And when he is sober again he knows he must avoid going alone into a "Mexican" joint.

The cowboy's life is still colorful! And why not? He is an outdoors man, and there is still plenty of outdoor work to be done in this country away from offices and factories. It may be the bias of my mind, but I do not stress the industrial side of America, perhaps because everybody knows about it, and it is more exciting to stress the colorful side of the country about which we do not hear so much. I feel as a Santa Fe poet friend of mine, Margaret Lohlker, felt when she wrote of New Mexico in "We Too Are America":

"There is something alive and warm  
Like the earth to lie on at noonday,  
That too is America.  
Cold machine claws have not squeezed us  
As hard as the people of cities;  
The new buds we put forth are not crushed."

## IV

When United States Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy complained in England that British newspapers served up too many gangster shootings and kidnappings as typical of American news, I sympathized; but I am one of the correspondents who can plead Not Guilty to featuring that kind of news. I write between twenty and twenty-five thousand words a month and practically all

my stuff appears in provincial papers; almost never do I deal with crime. Crime is exhausted by the daily cables of other correspondents and news agencies; also, there are more interesting things to write about.

Two years before Ambassador Kennedy criticized British newspapers for their limited outlook on American news I had written an article in *The Foreign Press*, the news sheet of the Association of Foreign Press Correspondents in the United States, saying much the same thing. This piece came to the attention of several London editors, and an article quoting from mine appeared in an important London weekly in which the writer felt that something ought to be done about it—that America was bigger and better than anyone would suspect from the information given in London papers. The secret is for the correspondent to detect the unusual in the ordinary, the exciting in the matter-of-fact; and then to convince his editor that there is more to America than is to be found in gangster killings and kidnappings, in disasters and lynchings.

Talking of lynchings, there are English readers who know little about the American Negro save what they have read in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or in the latest story of mob murder reported to their newspapers. In a search for the "real" America one must not forget the 12,000,000 Negroes, a tenth of America's population. There are hundreds of thousands of Negroes in the United States of whom any country could be proud; in fact, most of them are useful citizens even if they serve in humble ways. Uncle Tom is a sentimental figure, but there is

nothing sentimental about the employment—and exploitation—of the American Negro. First to be laid off in bad times, last to be taken on when times grow better, he has his hardships; but when there is work to be done he does a decent job on the whole. I have seen him in the South and in the North; in his segregated section of a street car and at New York's Carnegie Hall symphony concerts. One night at Carnegie I heard a huge audience applaud again and again the symphony of William L. Dawson, of Tuskegee Institute, who came forward to bow his acknowledgments. In music the Negro takes a prominent place; he is also coming to the front in literature and art. And what a big moment it was when President Roosevelt shook hands with Dr. George Washington Carver, Tuskegee's Negro scientist! The Institute is doing splendid work, and has proved that pigmentation has nothing to do with proficiency in studies; the black man can hold his own with the white if given a chance.

Negroes are among the keenest of the youngsters and grownups who attend New York community music schools. Take the case of a Negro janitor earning fifteen dollars a week, who, despite his responsibility as husband and father to a family consisting of wife and six children, still manages to spare three of those dollars every week between October and the end of May so that two of his children can learn music at the Manhattan School of Music, an extremely well-run institution on New York's Upper East Side, supported by wealthy patrons and the small fees of students. Musicians like Myra Hess, José Iturbi, Fritz Kreisler, Pablo Casals, Ernest Schelling,

Harold Bauer, show their interest by joining an auxiliary board. Most of the students attending the school are white, but there is an enthusiastic sprinkling of Negroes.

The Negro is discovering the power of organization in such groups as the Association for the Advancement of Colored People, for which Walter White, Negro novelist, has done brilliant work as secretary, and the National Negro Congress, which numbers 450,000 members. Trade unions are beginning to realize that they must not draw the color line, that the interests of all workers, white and black, are common. True, the color line still bothers many people. When I was in India I ran into it, although there the color was brown, not black. I had a grand time going around with a young Gandhi disciple, who, of course, was wearing his own homespun white cotton clothes. We palled up so well that I invited him to dinner at my hotel. He declined—to save himself embarrassing incidents that might have occurred there. We could walk about together, but we couldn't dine together at a white man's hotel. Which was rather like the experience of a New York friend of mine who invited a Negro—every inch a gentleman—to his club. There was quite a row when the waiter hesitated to serve dinner, but my friend won out. No color bar for him! Prejudice dies hard, but possibly it will die eventually, here and in the British Empire.

## V

The European who visits America for the first time usually enters by New York, and here he is very much

aware of the automobiles and skyscrapers. Presently he is caught up in the swift tide of the city—Broadway, night clubs, roof gardens, restaurants. He begins to think of America as a colossal city where even in depression days more money is being spent than in Europe. It is rather a shock to discover when he gets out of New York and starts exploring the country that America is still largely agricultural, and on inquiry he finds that the land produces livelihood for more than 30,000,000 persons. He finds that a strong rural life persists, and he begins to understand why no man with Presidential ambitions can hope to succeed without cultivating the Farm Belt. When he is in New York he gets the impression that New York—particularly Wall Street!—runs the nation, and as the financial capital this is true to a considerable extent; but when he moves on to Washington and takes in a Congressional debate or two he questions whether he has arrived at the whole truth. It is not that the debates are brilliant but that the speakers come from forty-eight states and represent different regional interests which their constituents expect them to defend and promote.

Foreign correspondents' dispatches to Europe are full of "Roosevelt says" and "Roosevelt does," convenient cable devices to achieve conciseness and drama, but it becomes clear to the unprejudiced observer that Congressmen and Senators are also saying and doing things and that Roosevelt may propose but Congress disposes. Roosevelt, or any other President, is not America; the White House is not America. Congress, in its representative character, is getting a little nearer the "real" Amer-

ica. And behind Congress are the wire-pullers and the people; they must be remembered.

To illustrate. It is perfectly well known that President Roosevelt has been unable to carry the whole country with him in his foreign policy. Isolationist sentiment is strong, especially when rooted in a desire to keep this country out of war. In times of crisis the President at the White House end of the trans-Atlantic telephone may be in a position to make decisions denied to his fellow countrymen, because they lack his special information, but they may be in a position to take the longer, even wiser, view because they, not being intimately involved, can see as spectators more of the game.

I was taking a walk out West one afternoon, a pleasant stroll in the direction of the mountains, when I passed a farmer holding forth to a pal on the subject of America's relations toward Europe. "We have enough trade in the Americas without spending a damn nickel over there," said the farmer as he stood by a gate. "Let them do as they damn please!" One might know quite a lot about isolationism, but the farmer's damns gave it force. Everyone knows there is a great body of opinion in this country which contends that the less America has to do with Europe the better it will be for America; but when one accidentally runs into somebody forcefully expressing that view it becomes a vivid impression.

In the West one quite naturally asks, "Why should America get messed up in Europe? One war merely leads to another—and unpaid debts. So what?" In the West everybody has been so busy creating a new country

within the New World that a man's thoughts are more for the America he has made than for the Europe he has left. In the West, Europe not only is far away, but *feels* far away. The East is forever turning its eyes toward Europe, the West turns its eyes to the land it has created. That is why it is so useful in a democracy to have a representative body like Congress where the views of the whole country have to be considered, and where the Europe-minded East has to take the isolationist West into consultation before sweeping the country into decisions from which there can be no retreat.

## VI

It used to be the fashion for ship-news reporters to ask visiting celebrities, after the inevitable question about the New York skyline, what they thought of American women, a question that might be asked before the ocean liner had passed the Statue of Liberty. Reporters are not quite so naive these days, but the fact remains that foreigners have plenty to say about American women. Whenever a correspondent is hard up for a topic he writes an article about the American woman—her hard brilliance, her lipstick and rouge, her slender figure, her high-heeled shoes, her smart gowns. Journalists, novelists, lecturers have talked of how she dominates the American male, how America is a woman's land, how the relationship of men and women is 80 to 20 per cent in favor of the women. In the eyes of the foreigner an American woman is either divorced or about to be divorced; she

is spendthrift, she never works—innumerable household gadgets do the work for her—she drinks cocktails and attends endless bridge parties. Her man, poor worm, obeys her slightest whim when she whistles.

There is a lot of amiable nonsense that can be written along this line on a dull day, but the fact remains that anyone in search of the "real" America knows such a picture to be a mere caricature—especially since the depression. If the American woman is a somewhat spoiled darling, it is because she can afford to be choosy—there are 2,000,000 more men than women in this country. In Great Britain the woman cannot be choosy—there are 2,000,000 more women than men! But, facetiousness aside, the depression did have the effect of establishing men and women on a fifty-fifty basis; homes were saved by the desperate efforts of husbands and wives. When the man failed to find a job and his wife landed one he became acquainted with dishes and diapers and she with stenographers' notebooks and typewriters. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that the depression opened the eyes of visiting Europeans to what had always existed beneath the surface. When men and women pioneered in covered wagons—and you still hear stories of what they did in the Middle West and the Far West—the great adventure had to be run as a fifty-fifty enterprise; otherwise it would have ended in ignominious failure.

At a very civilized tea party in Santa Fe I talked with an old lady, a pioneer, whose father, like liberty-loving Germans of today, had fled Germany to escape service in that country's army, a man who had braved the terrors



of the Southwest in a covered wagon to settle the country despite the quite natural opposition of the Indians. We were standing in the comfortable living room of an adobe house as we talked, looking toward the low, thick trees on the mountains behind which it would be easy to hide.

"When my father came out to this country," said the old lady, "Indians would hide behind trees like those and shoot the white men. Women who came out with the pioneers wonder how they ever lived through those terrible times. All journeys had to be made under escort of armed men."

Life out West is not as strenuous these days, but it is still a fifty-fifty proposition. The woman coming here from the East misses the very latest styles as displayed in Fifth Avenue stores; she dislikes thunder and dust storms, and an occasional tornado; she misses the best plays of Broadway and the Carnegie Hall concerts. She says that life must include a trip to New York now and then—in which case she can bear up. And she does. She is a sport. A man finds that she is a comrade as well as a wife. Westerners say this comradeship is a Western characteristic, but actually it is characteristic throughout the country, even if, perhaps, it is more spontaneous in the West. Divorces notwithstanding, the men and women of this country pull together as a whole.

## VII

Americans are more gregarious than the English. I have found an open-hearted warmth and welcome in

the West, but even when I came a stranger to New York I suffered an overwhelming loneliness for only an hour or two. The stranger is not greeted with a nod and a smile in a New York subway as he is on the street in Santa Fe, but with all those millions of "sardines" he would soon be giddy if he did! New Yorkers are friendly, like the English, when you get to know them. Friendliness is characteristic of the American, man and woman; so are frankness, forthrightness, independence, initiative. Westerners have tried to make me say that Easterners are cold, but I have not been able to oblige. It simply isn't so. I don't think the English are cold—but I don't expect to speak to the Englishman I meet by chance in the same carriage of a railroad train. It isn't done! Who talks to whom on a New York subway? I had a few introductions when I first went to New York, and the rest was easy. I had introductions when I went West—and the Westerners threw open their homes to me. Friendliness, one must insist, is a characteristic of the American—East or West. Moreover, the American is a vigorous, warm-hearted individual, clever with brain and hand, who has a good chance of running the world in the not distant future.

For I agree with Dr. Robert A. Millikan, of the California Institute of Technology, who in New York pictured a golden age for America if only world peace can be restored and maintained. He showed that power machines had already conferred many benefits upon this country, eliminating slave labor, producing an eight-hour instead of a twelve- or fourteen-hour day, providing on

the average an automobile for every family, and that these benefits should increase if the nations had the good sense to remain more or less peaceful. And if that golden age comes it will have to be the achievement of America as a whole, of the 130,000,000 people between the Atlantic and the Pacific. It will include all Americans, all the towns and cities, all the sections and regions I have tried to indicate in this brief story. It will be coupled with national unity, but not, I hope, in the sense of uniformity. This country is stimulating because it includes so many different people and places; its standardization is a convenience, not its charm. It is thrilling to realize that the New Englander and the New Mexican belong to the same nation; that the Negro and the Nordic here find a home; that Jew and Gentile can cooperate in gigantic enterprises, social and economic; that the sophistication of New York can be matched by the social graces of many a lovely home in the South; that Wall Street financiers are offset by artists and playwrights and novelists who paint and write first and hope the check will come in afterwards; that twentieth-century refugees from persecution in Europe can take their place side by side with the descendants of Mayflower Pilgrims; that the Indian still lives in the land he entered from Asia hundreds of years before the coming of the white man; that Republicans can still damn Democrats without leading to a bloody revolution! Somewhere amid this infinite variety you will find the Real America; rather, if you can hold all these different expressions of American life in your mind at one and the same time you will catch a glimpse of this

sensational country. The Real America is not here or there, it is everywhere within the borders of the United States. It is all kinds of Americans doing all sorts of things; the most thrilling pageant yet created on this planet!

XV

PETE SANSTOL

*Norway*

“From Prize Ring to Press Box”

PETE SANSTOL, born in Moi, Norway, 1905. Amateur boxer in 1920, amateur bantamweight champion of Norway in 1923, and professional in 1925. Fought more than 200 times in Europe and America. Covered sporting events for Norwegian newspapers and is now correspondent for *Tidens Tegn*, Oslo, Norway.

## XV

### *FROM PRIZE RING TO PRESS BOX*

*By Pete Sanstol*

#### I

**R**IGHT off the bat, I am going to admit that what I say may seem a little mixed up. But I am in a peculiar position. I am an ex-pugilist with fourteen years' ring experience. I am a sports correspondent of a Norwegian paper. I am a Norwegian immigrant. And what somehow seems the most thrilling of all the experiences of a very active life is that I am about to become an American citizen. All these things naturally influence my impression of America.

I have never thought it was my business to criticize the United States. If I did not like the country I wouldn't stay here. I have never had any patience with the foreign critics who are no sooner off the boat than they begin to tell Americans how to run their country. The soap-box orator who shouts in broken English about what is wrong with the United States is simply a very young man in a hell of a hurry. His old country took centuries to evolve its present civilization, but he wants to change the new country over night.

If you really want to know what I think of you Ameri-

cans down deep in my heart you can guess it from the fact that I shall be a full-fledged citizen in a few months. And a little further on I am going to say something about the experiences and the reflections which made me pick America as my adoptive mother country.

But it is time for me to introduce myself. I was born in Moi, Norway. As a young boy I was what you folks would call a "sissy." But at fifteen I broke away from the too tender coddling of my mother and three older sisters and went in for amateur boxing. At eighteen I was amateur bantamweight champion of Norway. In 1925, I turned professional fighter in Oslo, Norway, and went at once to Berlin, where I won three fights. Within a year I was in Paris, where an American manager saw me and brought me to the United States. I landed in New York City in 1927.

What a life! I could not speak much English, and so I found it very difficult to understand the people around me. They were so different from those I had known in the old world! I even found the Norwegians, the Swedes, the Danes, the Germans, the Frenchmen and the Englishmen changed by these United States. How had they changed? I find it very hard to explain. For one thing, they had acquired the American sense of humor. For you Americans certainly have a delightful lightness of nature in many things. When the boat docked here on my first trip from Europe, the newsboys came on board. It was Sunday, and the papers were wrapped in the "funnies." Those sheets were the first things most of the Americans opened. How they laughed and enjoyed the



antics of the comic boys and girls! The Europeans, standing about, including myself, thought that very silly, indeed. Just another proof, they said, that the Americans had no intellectual development. Now I understand. For I, too, do the same thing. Why? Because those comics are the spirit of America—fresh, happy, even expressing a certain depth of homely wisdom in a new way.

Here in the United States I found that the boxers, too, were different. My manager, who was also my teacher, and by his kindness to me my second father, told me to act like a gentleman at any cost. I tried my best. I soon discovered that in America you could be accepted as a gentleman outside the prize ring—even though you could not always be a gentleman inside of it.

It so happened that my first opponent here had a careless way of sticking his thumb in my eye. After each of his repeated jabs with his thumb, in which he apparently tried his best to gouge out my optics, he would politely say, "Oh, I am so sorry." I would reply in my best Scandinavian English: "You are welcome." When the fight ended I had two closed eyes, and was blinded temporarily.

I was angry and sore while recuperating in a dark room and didn't make any bones about it to my manager. "Is this boxing?" I asked him. He said, "Sure, you're in America now, and over here we have one rule of the game which says, that if a Palooka jabs his finger in your eye you stick two fingers in his eye."

This impressed me, as you may believe from the fact that as soon as I was able to start training again I drew

two circles about the size of a man's eye on a hanging sandbag and religiously practised poking my thumb within these circles. In fact, I became expert.

My manager didn't know what an apt pupil I was. When I asked him for a return match with the same man who had jabbed my eyes so unmercifully, he said, "Listen, Pete, the last time I had to put you in a dark room after the fight. Probably another time you'll wind up in a hospital." But I knew what I was doing and I insisted on the return fight.

When we were in the squared circle, the referee called us together and gave us the usual instructions, ending up by saying, "Shake hands, boys, and come out fighting!"

We went to our corners and the gong sounded. We both danced out into the middle of the ring. I remembered that in my first meeting with my opponent, he had made a gesture of shaking hands, and that when I had lowered my hands to shake hands with him, he had let me have it with the palm of his hands on my cheek bone, and his thumb gouging my eye. This time things were to be different! Before he had time even to get up his hands, I let him have a right and left, my thumbs aimed at his right and his left eye. My aim was perfect. The tables had been turned. He yelled loud to the referee, "This guy is 'moldering' me."

The referee didn't stop the fight, but told us to get back in there and throw our punches. The lad couldn't take it. The fight was stopped in the third round and I was awarded a technical knockout. My opponent has never been in the ring since.

This gouging story might be taken as a contradiction of my appreciation of the American spirit of fair play in sports. But professional prize-fighting is not a sport, it is a business. And in business, it is the American tradition to beat your competitor any way you can. American business, in spite of new ethics and new regulations, is still "every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost."

I am often asked whether there is any difference in the methods used for developing a fighter in Europe and in the United States. There is all the difference in the world. European boxers are trained in the English method, developing what is called the English style. This consists largely of straight lefts, and again straight lefts. The European boxer poses with a very stiff backbone, standing extremely erect. His stance would make an American audience laugh. In America, the methods employed seek to develop an individual style. Thus, Jack Dempsey fought best in a crouch, while Tommy Laughlin and Gene Tunney developed the English style. Tony Galento could never be taught to throw a straight left, as his style depends upon a crouch and "hay-makers" starting from the floor. Yet, all of these men held the championship in their respective divisions, except Galento, and he gave a good account of himself in his championship fight with Joe Louis.

In Europe, the public is trained to look for finer points of exhibition boxing. An audience in London will sit for fifteen rounds rigidly hypnotized at an exhibition of boxing in which a straight left is the only punch thrown. You hear the audience cry, "Look at that left!"

They leave the hall feeling they have had their money's worth.

The American audience doesn't give a whoop whether the fighter uses a straight left or a right hook. They crave blood. They want dynamite tossed into the ring at one-second intervals, and no audience in the world will pay so much at the gate to see what they want. For example, the American sport arena has never seen drama so packed with thrills as when Firpo, the Bull of the Pampas, knocked Champion Dempsey through the ropes into the press box. When Dempsey was shoved back through the ropes and into the ring he separated Firpo from his ambitions for the count of ten. The Louis-Galento fiasco was packed with thrills and action. Everybody was happy.

Action, punch, color! Those are the three demands of an American boxing crowd, or of any sports audience, for that matter. These things are much more important than an exhibition of skill or a close contest lasting long enough to give the spectators their money's worth on a time basis. After a one-sided match ending with a knock-out in a round or two, a European audience would raise a riot and storm the box office, demanding their money back.

"Color" in this sense is a word that I wouldn't know how to translate into any European language I know. And "a colorful fighter" is unknown in sport discussions in the old country.

And "punch," by the way, is wanted in all sports: the "smash" and service aces of Tilden, the home runs of

Babe Ruth, the spectacular scoring forward-pass in football.

The American ideal of fair play appeals to me as being one of this country's greatest assets. Fair play in America means just what it says. While abroad, I read over and over in European papers that you Americans always won because you cheated. That absolutely is not true. You have been made the "goat" by European sports writers.

If I were asked to make a constructive criticism of American sportsmanship, as compared with European sportsmanship, it would be that there is an apparent lack of discipline in professional fighting here in America. Probably this is inevitable when one considers that the American style of boxing is based on individuality, and that a boxer gets a chance at the championship crown not only because he is good, but because he has nerve enough to say through the newspapers: "I'll fight that big bum."

I have sat in press boxes in Europe and in America, and one of the first things that struck me as being sportsman-like here was the exchange of ideas and opinions among sports writers working for competing papers. Here I feel perfectly at liberty to ask Damon Runyon's opinion, for he would give it to me. One hears constantly, "Did you see that?" "Did you notice that right?" etc., all expressed freely, so that everybody could hear it. In Europe the sports writer is secretive, and holds his hand over his notes as he writes, and if you were to ask his opinion, what you would get would be anything but his true opinion. To find out what a European sports writer really

thought, you would have to read his column the next morning.

But let me come back to finish up my ring history in a few words. My hardest fight and greatest failure was against Al Brown when we fought for the world's title at the Forum in Montreal. The hardest punch I ever received was also in a Montreal ring. That night Bernasconi clipped me in our fight at the Ball Park. My fight with Escobar in Montreal was the wind-up of twelve years in the American ring. What a terrible pasting I took that night! It seemed to me that I had been beaten so badly that all my former victories must surely be overshadowed. I doubted that I could ever show my face again on the streets of Montreal.

However, when I became the manager of Jarl Johnson, we received an offer for a bout in Montreal. I got off the train in the Canadian city with some trepidation, which continued during my first day in town. I was crossing a crowded street intersection, however, when a traffic cop saw me and yelled, "Hey, Pete, mon ami, Pete." He stopped the traffic. He rushed over and threw both arms around me and gave me a terrific hug. I did not know his name then, and I do not know it now, but he told me what a thrill I had given him in the Escobar fight. So I consider my greatest defeat was a victory after all. In America I could fight my hardest, meet my greatest defeat, but retain my old friends, who apparently loved me as much when I was down as when I was up. To find that out about the people living on this continent was a great triumph for me.

## II

Perhaps the grandest thing about this America of yours is that everyone stands on his own feet, that he is accepted as a man. In Europe one's individuality is obscured by one's occupation. In Norway, for instance, a blacksmith is always a blacksmith, or as in my case, always a prizefighter. It was in the United States that I put on my first tuxedo, and when I go to a party in this country nobody wants to know how I earn my living, but just whether I am a good fellow.

In Norway, as in many other countries, one must always state one's "occupation" when registering at a hotel. Here, as long as you pay your bill, your occupation is your own affair. Once on a return visit to Norway, I was asked, as usual, to write down my occupation. This made me angry all of a sudden. I took the pen and wrote down in the appropriate place the mysterious initials "B.V.D." and explained to the puzzled clerk that this was an American occupational abbreviation.

In Europe, if you are introduced to someone, the first question is, "What is your occupation?" In North America, I am just "Mr. Sanstol," and what I do is my own business unless there is some special reason for discussing it. I have discovered that the first of the American ten commandments is, "Mind your own business."

In fact, when I first came to America nobody asked whether I was rich or poor, educated or illiterate. All they asked was: "Can this Palooka fight?" When they found I could, they gave me all the credit I deserved—and more.

At home the fact that I was once a fighter means I could never be a gentleman. Here I am accepted as a gentleman unless or until I prove myself otherwise. The only thing I must do is to make myself useful. In other words, I have a chance.

And that brings me to the great thing about America which you Americans are now beginning either to doubt or to forget. To the immigrant—and here I include myself—the United States is still the land of opportunity. It is a place where everybody has a chance to make good.

It has been said many, many times that America worships the almighty dollar. Naturally, this has its bad side. But there is something to be said for dollar worship. It does give an incentive for the immigrant who feels that he can come here and by hard work, self-denial, thrift, can accumulate enough dollars to give him self-respect, to enable him to go back to Norway proud to show an American dollar in his purse, and to educate his children and to prepare them for a social and cultural status which they never could have hoped to achieve in the old country. Another thing, even though the immigrant may never learn to speak English well, or to acquire the social graces, he knows that if he can make good as a money-getter, he will win the respect of the people about him. The American community always delights to honor the man who can make money. Every immigrant has a feeling that maybe he can be another Carnegie.

And while I definitely want to avoid giving advice to the United States, as so many Europeans like to do, I have an idea that you are getting the wrong slant on im-



migration. It may be necessary, during the present economic crisis, to restrict the influx from abroad when there are not enough jobs for those already here. But it is the immigrant who has opened up your great northwestern plains, built your subways, and made your steel, to say nothing of mining your coal. It is this labor of people who knew they had to make good and were willing to work with an intense concentration on the job, which is the basis of your wealth. The native American tends, more or less, to despise manual labor and to live softly.

This is the American way as I see it. The immigrants come, with nothing but their strong right arms and the will to succeed. They are not afraid to do the hard work, the dirty work. They fill the mines and mills. They cultivate the arid plains and endure the long lonelinesses of the fishing fleets. They form the necessary substratum of the population in an economic sense. But they intend that their children shall rise a step above them, go to college, become teachers, political leaders, doctors and lawyers, artists; and then in turn, new waves of immigration, driven out perhaps by convulsions in the heart of Europe, replace the passing generation of foreign-born laborers.

Do not forget that it has been estimated that for every able-bodied worker who comes here, two or three persons are given employment in providing for his wants. A static population means a static economy. The old American stock is not reproducing itself, but the sons of the immigrants and their sons are being assimilated. And do not worry about being overcrowded. The theories of Malthus are as dead as the old man himself. There

is not the slightest doubt that, with intensive cultivation and intelligent control of distribution, this country could support a population of 300,000,000, just as well as it does 130,000,000. And if the present population wanted to do so, I am told, they could all be supported comfortably in the state of Texas.

But I am getting a little too deep into economic theory. I merely want to express my very strong feeling that America is the land of opportunity, and that in giving a chance to the industrious, ambitious immigrant it is creating the nation of the future.

### III

I want to impress upon you that we who come from Europe believe that the United States, in an economic sense, is still the land of opportunity. People say the United States hasn't a frontier any more. Maybe this is so in a purely geographical way. You haven't those great undeveloped territories. But there is still a frontier of the mind. There is so much still ahead of you. You are not satisfied with your very high standard of living. You intend to be even more comfortable, to be better housed and to get around even faster than you do now. The American who has a new invention will be encouraged to perfect it, can get capital to develop it—God knows there is no lack of capital in the United States—and if the idea is good enough and big enough, he has a chance to get rich.

Do not forget that only a European can truly appreci-

ate America. Despite all surface troubles, he knows it is still the land of opportunity and the land of plenty. I often think of the Polish welterweight I knew who was asked to enlist in the U.S. Army. He hardly knew what it was all about, but off he went with the recruiting officer. He was given a bed and a bath, and then in the morning—bread and butter for breakfast! Said he: "This is the country for me!" For there are millions of Europeans who never see white bread and butter on their tables.

Perhaps this little anecdote means nothing to you well-nourished Americans. Indeed, I fear that only a European really can appreciate it.

I have a suggestion to make to the young Americans who leave school or college discontented with their lot, criticizing their own country, grumbling about the lack of opportunity. Let them go to Europe and try to earn their own living for a year or two, living on what they earn. They will be only too glad to return home.

Of course, every European is asked what he thinks about American women. We are always surprised at the way they are treated in the United States. I remember my amazement at the way American men jumped up when a woman rose, when I was on my first voyage to the United States. I asked an American why they did this. He said it was a persistence of the frontier attitude, of the time when women were in a precious minority. True, there is not much gallantry in New York subways, but New York is not America.

As for the American women themselves—if I only dared

write what I think about you! You are, above all, a funny combination of a true friend and a real woman—all at the same time. I never can get wise to you; I realize, however, that you have conquered me by your frankness and understanding. You American women are so different from those I knew in Europe. I cannot figure you out. I am puzzled, and my ideas about you are changing every day, which probably is the only explanation why I am still single. Once I fell in love with a lovely American girl, but she did not like my work. I loved her so much that I finally made up my mind to get myself another job. One day I told her I had been to see a doctor who was going to practise plastic surgery on my battered nose. She looked at me a little surprised and said, "Please, Pete, don't let him touch your nose, that is what is cute about you."

I have said something about New York not being America. New York was the city I first came to, and in the gymnasiums there I picked up the New York slang which I took to be standard English. But the minute I got away from New York to Washington, Boston, the Middle West, California, I found out that I was using almost a foreign tongue. My "New Yorkese" was resented—or corrected; it was something that people throughout the country just did not think American. It was "New York."

New York is not so much an American city as a link with Europe. It is cosmopolitan, filled with hundreds of thousands of people speaking Italian, Yiddish, German, Spanish, Polish, or what have you. The foreigner who

comes to New York and stays there too long runs a good risk of never really becoming an American.

And yet New York never ceases to thrill me. Maybe it isn't the United States, but the United States without New York isn't the United States. In this city I myself may be nobody, but I feel important because I am at the center of things. This isn't just a city, it is a metropolis, yes, a megalopolis. In it I feel the heartbeat of this mighty country. Here America's activities are concentrated. Here has been built America's crowning material achievement. Here the ablest come to find the fullest play for their talents, the greatest rewards of their efforts. The solid human masses in the crowded streets and subways push on relentlessly to their mysterious destinations. On your sidewalks people are smarter, brisker than elsewhere, and it seems to me, somewhat darker of complexion, sharper voiced. The concentration of wealth in the downtown skyscraper district is oppressive; the glitter of the midtown avenues dazzles the stranger. And yet everywhere dirt and noise appal. Visitors from the rest of the country travel long distances just to "see New York" as the greatest show the land affords. The city itself is the New York World's Fair's greatest rival. All businesses, organizations, causes must have their headquarters here; and here both good and evil seem to be exaggerated because of the large scale of everything done in New York. New York has all the dominating quality of old world capitals, but with the verve of the brisk new world; and the life in its streets and buildings moves at a faster tempo than in any other city in the world.

## IV

I said at the beginning that I don't intend to criticize, but I would like to make one or two very mild suggestions.

May I suggest that there are two American exports to Europe that should be put under some sort of embargo? The American tourist abroad is largely responsible for European lack of respect for the United States. This tourist—conspicuously in Paris—removed from the restraints and responsibilities of home, forgets his manners, his dignity, sometimes even the ordinary decencies. He is bad advertising for the United States.

So are the widely circulated "gangster" films that make us think of Chicago as a weird city where "killers" roam the "loop" district beneath the elevated railroad structure, with machine guns spilling death from "dark green sedans," and where gangster duels always end unhappily for the "innocent bystander." We know all too much about your Dillingers and your Dutch Schultzes. We have to visit America to come to know that it is on the whole a land of decent, home-loving, God-fearing folk.

And then there is one other thing. I often wish you had a different national anthem—or even a different attitude toward the one you have. I have been so deeply impressed by the way an English or Canadian audience rises and sings "God Save the King" at the end of a theatrical performance or at a banquet. The song comes from the heart. One need not be an Englishman to share the thrill. When you Americans sing the "Star Spangled

Banner," you rise dutifully and respectfully, but the song does not come from the heart. People will join in the first few lines of the song; then they stumble over the first high notes and quite forget the meaningless words. There is no patriotic thrill. I do wish that you had a simple, soul-stirring national hymn that you could know by heart and sing from the heart.

I have noticed a rather strange sense of inferiority; whether it is a result of modesty or of national youthfulness I cannot say. There is the undue respect paid to European lecturers and other personalities. You fail to realize the extent to which you have been going ahead culturally. I have been able to notice this change even in my short lifetime. When I lived in Norway I would read in the papers about some American educator or social worker coming to study what was being done in the Scandinavian countries. Today the same news columns tell of European educators going to study educational techniques in the United States, of European scientists visiting American research laboratories, of European social workers all admiration over slum-clearing projects in La Guardia's New York. They all return home with the same story of how far the United States is ahead of the rest of the world. I do not believe that you Americans realize this; in fact, as a nation you do not realize that you are grown up.

And as for your future. I am just an ex-prize fighter, not a scholar. But I have a feeling that in the United States we see the next great World Empire. The British Empire seems to be cracking up. The ancient empires,

so I have read, were doomed because they were built on a basis of slavery. The United States is a nation of free men—despite some dreadful injustices and oppressions. And it will not be an empire under arms. For empire building by force brings united resistance. The next great empire will not be a German empire. For Germany wears blinders. It can see only in one direction and does not know what is going on at one side or the other. No narrowly nationalistic nation can become a great world empire. America has everything, wealth, brains and ambition. It is collecting the talents of a score of races as oppression sweeps Europe and Asia. Whatever happens in Europe, the future is America's.













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